

“More Than”

Jesus says, “Whoever loves (fill in the blank) MORE THAN me, is not worthy of me.” Obviously, this is a First Commandment issue – “You shall have no other gods.” What does this mean – “We should fear, love and trust in God ABOVE all things.”

Have you kept this commandment? If you think you have – that is exactly why Jesus (the Prince of Peace) comes to you today with a sword – to put to death your false sense of peace – to save your life – so that you may follow Him (in the truest sense of the First Commandment).

What does it mean to love something MORE THAN God? Our knee-jerk reaction is to think of other false gods – and then justify ourselves saying – “I don’t worship the god of Islam, or Buddha, or the Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons, or trust in horoscopes or crystals.”

But you know the other false gods you’ve loved MORE THAN the one true God. You no doubt have worshipped the gods of pleasure & fun – recreation & sport – money & things – the false gods of prestige & standing & honor & respect & body image, MORE THAN the Lord who has created, redeemed, and sanctified you.

When one uses pornography, he loves pleasure MORE THAN God. When one lies / cheats / steals, he loves money MORE THAN God. When one chooses camping / ball tournaments / laying in bed over God’s Word & Sacraments, he loves something MORE THAN God.

But the sword of Jesus pierces us to the heart when He speaks of love for our family this morning. Now He’s gone too far!!! No one is more Pro-Family than God, so how can He say such a thing?

The one true God (who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit) – who has created your life, and ordered your life, and placed you within a family – desires to preserve these good gifts for you. And so, He demands that you love Him MORE THAN your family.

When one puts their spouse or children before God, he loves his family MORE THAN God – actually, he loves HIMSELF more than God!!! What do I mean by that?

When God tells you what is good for your spouse and children and yourself – and you back off, or change His Word, or ignore it – you are trumping God. You are living as if you know better, and can provide what is good for your family. You have loved yourself MORE THAN God – and truth be told – you have not loved your family.

If you truly love your family you would take up your cross (deny yourself), and follow Jesus. You would want what God wants for them.

We live in a sin-fallen world that doesn't know God and the good that He desires for His whole creation. As Christians, we are often deceived by the world's ideologies, temptations, and lure of escaping from all pain and suffering and rejection.

That's the wide and easy road laid out before us – which makes the Lord's will for our lives seem even more narrow and hard. Following Jesus and His Word seems impossible – and it is – for us, but not for God.

That's why He doesn't abandon us to our selves and the world's and our own desires. Rather, He comes to us in human flesh and blood in His Son, Jesus Christ – so that we may know where His Word leads us – through death and the grave to life everlasting!

That's why Jesus comes to us today with His sword – to put our false belief, our sinful desires, our worship of self, to death. Jesus speaks His Word into your ears today to repent you – so that you may see your sin and turn from it. He comes to cover you with His redeeming blood – so that you may know and believe that you are forgiven for all your sin – so that you may trust that God loves you MORE THAN anything!

In this ongoing life of repentance – your old way of living is “lost” so that the new life in Christ may be found. And what a good life He desires and gives to you – one of love and faith toward God – and love for your neighbor, including and especially your spouse and children and parents.

Jesus comes to you today with the sword of His Word – not because He desires death, but life – so that you may truly live. He comes with sword – not because He seeks to divide your family, but to unite you as the family He has given you to be – to live in His peace.

I normally conclude my sermons with the words of the Apostle Paul from Philippians 4 – but because you hear them so often, you might not always take them to heart – so listen to them now. “The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

This peace cannot be found apart from Jesus Christ. The peace that He gives to you is that of sins forgiven – the peace of being reconciled to God and one another. When God washes you in Holy Baptism and makes you to be His own – He has made you to be a new man or a new woman.

What does this mean? It means taking your cross and following Jesus. It means living by faith in Jesus – following Him into the green pastures of all that is good – following Him through this life, through death and the grave, to life everlasting.

Peace be with you. Amen.