

The sermon

Intro

This advent season we've been considering the question, **why did Jesus come?** Advent means coming.

One thing we learned is that Jesus came for the sick. There's a structural malfunction, a spiritual infection inside human hearts. Jesus came to restore sick, disordered, broken, troubled, confused, discouraged human hearts.

Another thing we learned is that Jesus came to save the world. Jesus was sent on a rescue mission. To save us from God's punishment and give us eternal life.

Then we learned that Jesus came to bring sight and blindness. Jesus came to help confused people (us) understand ourselves and God's world correctly.

This morning we consider some of the fallout we experience because Jesus came.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Point 1: Jesus disrupts human relationships (10:34-36)

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. – 10:34

A sword pictures the division caused by Jesus' coming. Disruption of human relationships. People set against one another because some have chosen to give Jesus their allegiance.

What about the famous Christmas passage that calls Jesus the prince of peace?

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. – Isaiah 9:6-7

Jesus is the child born who's called the "Prince of Peace."

Do we have a Bible contradiction here? No. Isaiah 9 is talking about Jesus' 2nd coming. Matthew 10 is talking about Jesus' 1st coming. When Jesus comes a 2nd time, he will rule forevermore, establishing universal and everlasting peace. Today, in the inter-advent age, the time between Jesus' comings, Jesus does in fact bring division, disruption of human relationships.

10:35 spells out some of the human relationships that are disrupted by Jesus' coming.

For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. – 10:35

Father and son. Mother and daughter. Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. – 10:36

The sword pictures enemies. Yes Jesus came to make family members enemies of one another. Sometimes Jesus makes provocative statements to get his point across.

How does this play out in real life?

In some families there's a long-held religious tradition that's been kept for generations. In some families it's Islam. In others it's Buddhism or Mormonism or Catholicism. In some families the religion is treasured and the teachings are valued. In other families, it's simply a tradition that you say you believe but the religion doesn't intersect with daily life. You just go along with it because it's what the family's always done.

But then one day one of the family members understands the gospel and embraces the gospel and begins following Jesus. Their beliefs change. Understanding that there's only one God who's eternally existed in three persons (Father, Son, and Spirit), the Christian doesn't worship Allah anymore. So they become a blasphemer in the eyes of their family. Another family member, understanding that the Bible is the only religious book that's God's word, stops reading the Book of Mormon. In fact, they find that the Book of Mormon conflicts with the Bible. They start thinking Joseph Smith is a false prophet.

Another person, coming from a religious tradition that doesn't intersect with daily life, starts living differently. They don't curse anymore. They won't take part in perverse jokes. They won't lie for a family member. They aren't fun to be around anymore because they don't get high or drunk now. When asked why, the new Christian has the audacity to say that such behavior is sin. And that God's word calls us to forsake sin. Different ideas about morality causes a disruption.

Allegiance

Fundamentally, believing in Jesus, repenting of sin, following Jesus, coming to Jesus, whatever you call it, involves a change of allegiance. Jesus is Lord. Therefore, what Jesus says is now more important than what my parent or sibling says. When Jesus disagrees with what my parent or sibling says, disruption follows.

Jesus came to bring a sword. This is the situation today. For some of you the disruption is severe. For some of you the disruption is minimal. Allegiance to Jesus causes disruption.

Point 2: Love Jesus most (10:37)

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. – 10:37

Love

Let's first define love. Love is commitment to the one loved. Love is affection for the one loved. Love is acting for the one loved.

True faith

Disruption is assumed in Jesus' statement. Your parent and your child have a problem with Jesus' teachings and the Bible. You have a choice to make. Will I give in to the pressure and do what my parent or child wants me to do? Or will I stand on God's word?

If I love a parent or child more than Jesus, I am not worthy of Jesus. Not worthy means denied access to the new heavens and new earth, rejected by Jesus on the day of judgment. 10:32-33 commented on this.

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. – **10:32-33**

On the day of judgment, some will be accepted by Jesus. Others will be rejected. The distinguishing factor? Some acknowledge Jesus in public. Others do not. Based on our response to Jesus, we'll either be accepted or rejected by him when he comes again.

10:37 is saying the same thing. This time the issue is what we love. If we love Jesus supremely, more than our parents and children, we'll be embraced by Jesus on that day.

The assumption here is that true believers love Jesus more than parent or child.

Home Alone 2

Kevin acknowledges he's done a lot of things wrong. Bird lady says, "Did you know that a good deed erases a bad deed?"

We're saved by faith alone. We contribute nothing to our salvation. Only Jesus' death on the cross can take away the guilt caused by our sin. There's nothing we can do to remove our guilt. There's nothing we can do to merit God's approval. Through faith Jesus' perfect righteousness is credited to our account.

On the other hand, the faith that saves isn't alone. True faith involves love, an affection for Jesus. If I believe Jesus died in my place to rescue me from my sins there's a number of beliefs that come into play.

- 1) God is merciful.
- 2) Jesus loves me.
- 3) God is good to me.
- 4) Sin is bad.
- 5) Jesus is Lord/God is judge.

If I believe these things to be true, how can I not love Jesus? Given God's mercy and Jesus' self-giving death, how can I not treasure Jesus above parent or child? If I believe Jesus is Lord, how can I not place his teachings above the opinions of parent or child? If God is the final judge, his verdict is weightier than my family's verdict.

How can we know if our faith is true? One proof is we love Jesus more than parent or child. When push comes to shove, we go with Jesus. This itself is an act of faith. Because I trust what Jesus says is true, I obey him rather than parent or child. Because I trust Jesus is Lord, I obey him rather than parent or child. Obedience always flows from faith!

Requirements of following Jesus

So Jesus requires that we love him more than family.

In case you're hearing Jesus incorrectly, he's not giving us a blank check to treat our parents and children poorly and neglect our obligations to them. Love for parents is good. Love for children is good too. For example, Exodus 20:12 says:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. –

Exodus 20:12

So loving Jesus more doesn't cancel out God's commands regarding our parents and children.

- 1) Love for parents is good.
- 2) Choosing parents over Jesus is bad.
- 3) Love for children is good.
- 4) Choosing children over Jesus is bad.
- 5) Following Jesus is good.
- 6) Following parents or children instead of Jesus is bad.

Application

The issue is, where does our ultimate allegiance lie? To family or Jesus?

How does this look in real life? Say your child decides to be a Buddhist. Your child puts pressure on you to embrace Buddhism as an acceptable expression of spirituality. Yes, they know you believe Jesus is only way to God. So they force

you to make a choice: them or Jesus. Or maybe they desperately want your approval. They want you to say, “It’s okay to be a Buddhist. There’s no harm in doing so.” They want you to affirm their new belief system. They just want you to be okay with it.

How do we respond?

- 1) We express our ongoing commitment to them, that we still love them, that we value them.
- 2) And we refuse to affirm what God says is false.

Meaning we maintain our Christian convictions. We don’t compromise God’s word to make people happy with us. We choose Jesus over family. We love Jesus more than family whom we love deeply. **We determine that Jesus is Lord, not my children.**

If we affirm our children’s sin, we love them more than Jesus. We follow them instead of Jesus. Yes it’s very common today for parents to follow their children. Parents, lead by loving Jesus more!

Yes, following Jesus affects friendships and relationships in the neighborhood. After believing in Jesus I wasn’t going to be the best man for my friend anymore because I wasn’t going to be able to plan out the bachelor party and all that went with it. I flew up to be there. I went to some of the activities. I read Scripture in the wedding. But things weren’t the same. **Loving Jesus most disrupts human relationships.**

Point 3: Chose Jesus over self-preservation (10:38-39)

Jesus continues:

And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. – 10:38-39

Failure to take one’s cross and follow Jesus results in rejection by Jesus on that final day (“not worthy of me”). One’s cross is whatever suffering comes with following Jesus. The assumption is following Jesus is going to create relational difficulties. People are going to reject you because you follow Jesus. People are going to pressure you to stop following Jesus. Some won’t share your excitement about eternal life.

Finding life in Jesus comes through losing our life.

What do we need to lose?

We need to release autonomy (independence, freedom, self-government) and embrace the Lordship of Jesus. What he says goes.

We need to release the lies we’ve been told. What Jesus says is true.

We need to release our love for sin. We need to love Jesus more.

We need to release our longing for self-preservation. Jesus suffered for us. He calls us to suffer for him.

These are a daily battle decades after we first believed.

What life is there to gain in Jesus?

Eternal life. Eternal life speaks to a quality of life: existence free from suffering, sin, and death. Eternal life speaks to a location: living where God dwells. Eternal life speaks to duration: unending existence.

Eternal life is being felt today! God is working in us character through the trials that following Jesus brings. God is transforming our loves, conforming our affections to our existence in the life to come. God is teaching us wisdom and knowledge so that we think the way we'll think in the life to come.

Positives

Jesus is open up front, sharing the negatives that come with following him. He's not a sleazy salesman. He challenges us to weigh the costs and the benefits, namely, eternal life.

And the Christian experience today isn't all negative. While some will be offended or hurt or angered by our Christian beliefs, others will admire the positive changes God creates in the human heart.

The parent who finds themselves at odds with their child's Christian beliefs might be confused when their child is more respectful, thankful, honest, and hard-working and doesn't curse them out anymore because they're following Jesus.

My selfish and foolish and depressed child has a healthy marriage and respectful children. Maybe the new birth is true?

The child who finds themselves at odds with their parents' Christian beliefs might be confused when their parent endures threats and accusations by the grace of God and continues to love their child despite their sin.

Maybe God really does work in the hearts of his people?

What your loved one wants to say to you

Maybe you find yourself angry about a family member's belief in Jesus, yet oddly drawn to the change of life you've seen. Maybe you're wondering to yourself if there's something to this Christianity? Know that they aren't believing Jesus to spite you. They don't enjoy the disruption of relationship. That's why they're tempted to forsake Jesus. It's just that they've discovered Jesus is the Son of God who died for their sin and they're trusting his promises. Nothing personal. They love Jesus. They still love you. It's just that Jesus is Lord and you are not. But because Jesus is Lord, they're trying to love as Jesus commands. They want you to have life in Jesus too!

They want you to understand that Jesus is good and Jesus is in charge. Because Jesus is good, he punishes sin. Because Jesus is good, he mercifully forgives sinners who come to him. Jesus died on the cross so that whoever believes can be forgiven of sin and have eternal life. They want you to have what they have in Jesus. They want you to believe in Jesus.

Conclusion

Jesus came to bring a sword. There're glorious consequences that come with believing in Jesus: eternal life. And there's a cross to bear: disrupted relationships. We're tempted to opt for self-preservation. Jesus says it's worth it to follow him. Choose life.