



In today's Gospel reading Jesus declares that he has come not to bring peace but a sword and to set members of families against each other.

It's important when reading this passage that we read it in light of everything else Jesus has ever written. We must read it in light of all His teachings on love and mercy, forgiveness and unity, etc. But with that said, what was Jesus talking about in this passage?

Our culture today wants to preach what we call "relativism." This is an idea that what is good and true for me may not be good and true for you but that, in spite of all having different "truths," we can still all be one happy family. But that's not the Truth!

The Truth (with a capital "T") is that God has established what is right and what is wrong. He has set His moral law over all of humanity and this cannot be undone. He has also set forth the truths of our faith and those cannot be undone. And that law is as true for me as it is for you or anyone else.

This passage above offers us the sobering reality that by rejecting all forms of relativism and by holding onto Truth, we also run the risk of division, even with those in our families. Jesus goes on to declare in this gospel reading that those who chose to follow him will have to keep preferring him even to their family members when that is called for. To be excluded from one's family, or one's peer group, for the sake of Jesus and his values, entails a huge loss. Yet, Jesus declares that those who lose their life for his sake will find it. The gospel calls on us to risk everything, even our most significant relationships, for the sake of Jesus and all he stands for. It is a call that remains as challenging today as it did when Jesus first uttered it. This is sad and this hurts. Jesus offers this passage especially to strengthen us when

this happens. If division happens as a result of our sin, shame on us. If it happens as a result of the Truth (as offered in mercy), then we should accept it as a result of the Gospel. Jesus was rejected and we should not be surprised if that happens to us, too.

Second, Jesus declares in today's gospel reading, 'if anyone gives as much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then, I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward'. The reference by Jesus to his disciples as 'little ones' may point ahead to a later saying of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew, according to which, unless disciples become like children, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Disciples are to live out of an awareness of their dependence on God for all that is needful. According to the first beatitude, it is to such 'poor in spirit' that the kingdom of God belongs. Jesus declares in our gospel reading that the smallest acts of kindness towards one of his followers, 'one of these little ones', such as the giving of a cup of cold water, will not go unrewarded. Within the family of disciples, the church, we need to be attentive to each other. Small acts of kindness can be as valuable as the heroic deed in the eyes of God the Father, of whom Jesus said that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without him knowing it.

Let us pray:

Lord, give me the wisdom and courage I need to accept all You have revealed. Help me to love You above all things and to accept whatever the consequences are of me following You.

Jesus, I Trust In You.