

## SERMON : THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

MAY the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. <Amen>

### THE COST OF SHOUTING FROM THE ROOFTOPS

Sometimes people get different things out of going to Church, depending upon what they expect to receive when they get there. I'll probably raise more than a few eyebrows with the music video I will play at the end of the service today ... you have been warned!

Sometimes people not only get different things out of going to Church but they can also be SHOCKED at what they hear being said at Church even when what they hear is a direct quote from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Take our reading today from Matthew's Gospel. Listen to these words: *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 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; and one's foes will be members of one's own household.”*

Now I don't know about you but at first glance these words from Jesus appear to be out of character. We know and love Jesus as the Prince of Peace, and as the one who greets His disciples “Peace Be With You,” and as the one that teaches us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves and as one who says, “Blessed are the peacemakers”. So these words can be shocking and troubling to us.

But upon closer examination these words are appropriate because Jesus is urging His disciples not to be afraid of passing on the “Good News” of the gospel.

Remember, Jesus calls His disciples in order to send them out into the world, and Jesus tells it like it is - He warned them of the possible costs of being associated with Him.

And Jesus knew that the cost of “telling in the light what you have heard in the dark, and proclaiming from the rooftops what you have heard whispered” would IN A METAPHORICAL SENSE bring a “sword” not only divide disciples from some parts of society but also from their friends AND EVEN THEIR FAMILIES MAY BE CLEFT ASUNDER!

Jesus never used ‘fake news’ or ‘false advertising’. Jesus knew the cost of discipleship would be very great and that we who follow Him would naturally be scared to death at the prospect of facing the many challenges and threats to our lives without the direct physical presence and strength of Jesus.

And so Jesus offered these words of comfort and explained to His disciples that they need not fear those who might react violently to the gospel message because even though they might destroy the body they could never destroy the soul.

And even though a man might react violently against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, Jesus assures us that we are very valuable to our Father in Heaven.

Listen to these words: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father’s will. And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

As WE journey together in the ministry the Lord has given to us it is a comfort to know that we are very precious to God, and that God even knows the number of hairs we have on our heads. Some having more than others :)

So my sisters and brothers, no matter what happens in the course of our daily lives, we can be confident that today and tomorrow we are in God’s gracious hands. And we can stand up and be a participant in God’s redeeming activity without worrying about the things that get in the way of ministry.

Surrounded by God’s love and assured that His promises surround Christians - we are insulated from the worst that life can throw at us. Yes, we might suffer, indeed as typical humans we will suffer, but we are dear to God and held in the palm of his hand.

Our souls are safe in his care.

We can and will endure.

In a modern society that often seems to be lacking in commitment, self-indulgent and uninterested, it is difficult to imagine people behaving with the courage and commitment of those first Christians ... BUT ...

Jesus’ message in this great chapter in Matthew’s Gospel is that as Jesus’ followers we are all involved with each other, with God’s will for the world, with his command to spread the word and to bring in the Kingdom of God.

Yes, the cost of proclaiming from the rooftops that we follow Jesus can be high.

Yes, we may lose a friend, a family member, a job, or maybe even our life but the “Good News” assures us that God faithfully watches over us even to the smallest detail ... even to the point of numbering the hairs on our head.

And that, my friends, is a love that is genuine and true and promised to all who would pick up there cross and follow Him. <pause>

And it is that love of Christ that makes me pour out my soul and say:

**So I shout out Your name, from the rooftops I proclaim  
That I am Yours, I am Yours!**

I runga e te Ingoa o te Atua, te Matua, te Tama me te Wairua Tapu.  
In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit <AMINE>