

## August 1 2010 Sermon

Luke 12:13-21 <sup>13</sup> Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." <sup>14</sup> But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." <sup>16</sup> And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, <sup>17</sup> and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup> And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' <sup>21</sup> So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

It can happen to your family! Perhaps it already has. It is all too frequent and common. When the parents die, the children fight over the inheritance. “Jesus, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” It was a family dispute between a man and his brother over the inheritance.

But Jesus refused to get involved. Jesus had not come to arbitrate disputes between people. He was not here to take sides in an argument or stick up for one person who had a complaint with another. Neither are Jesus’ servants, pastors, to take sides in disputes between members of the church over earthly and

material things. The purpose of Jesus and his servants is to convict of sin by proclaiming the law and to call people to repentance and faith by preaching the gospel. So Jesus, instead of taking the man's side, pointed out to him that if he had a dispute with his brother it was because of sin in his own heart.

The root cause of any and all disputes and arguments is a sinful heart. Fighting between brothers and sisters over an inheritance or any other sibling rivalry is just the outward manifestation of sin. In this case it was the sin of greed. It was mere greed that was causing these two men to fight over money

and property. And greed is covetousness, and covetousness is idolatry; sin against the First Commandment. Fighting is caused by greed, pride, jealousy, selfishness—sin. The bottom line is that strife between brothers is the fruit of a sinful heart.

Fighting among brothers is seen all through Bible history. Starting with Cain and Abel. Then Isaac and Ishmael; Jacob and Esau; and Joseph's brothers who wanted to kill him and finally sold him as a slave. King David's entire family was constantly fighting. Not only did one of his sons rape a sister, but another son killed his brother who had committed the rape. It was not

limited to sibling rivalry either. One of David's sons wanted the throne and tried to depose King David. St. Paul had to chastise the church in Corinth for their fighting and divisions. And St. James, the head of the church in Jerusalem and the patriarch over all the Christian churches in the First Century, wrote the Epistle of James reprimanding the believers for divisions and fighting taking place in all the churches.

So Jesus gives us a lesson on how to deal with arguments, resentments, or anger between people, whether brothers by blood or brothers in Christ. Jesus gives us a lesson on greed,

covetousness, and wanting to get our own way. There is a solution to rivalry, arguing, and disagreements in your family. That solution is Jesus himself.

We have determined the root cause of the argument: sin in our heart. James also says, “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel.”

Fighting and rivalry and bitterness, as Jesus points out, show an inner spiritual problem. Where there is discord and

bickering there is spiritual sickness festering away underneath the surface. If a family is in conflict, it is a spiritual problem. If a church is in conflict, it is spiritually sick. It is sin that causes strife and discord among people. St. Paul tells the Christians in Corinth, "...you have grievances against another, and you even go to court with one another. But, to have lawsuits at all with one another is a defeat for you." You have failed as Christians. "Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But, instead, you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers."

As Jesus points out, such fighting is the sin of greed. James says that, “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic...The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

The Apostle John tells us that the sign that you love God is that you love your fellow man...but if you hate your fellow man,



your hatred is toward God. How can two baptized people fight with each other? You are both born of God, you are brothers, and God is the Father of both of you. How can you go the Lord's Table if you have wrath in your heart? On that very cross where Jesus poured out his blood, he interceded for his murderers and forgave them. How can you remain angry with your brother and share together the same body and blood of the Lord? You profane the holy body and blood of the Lord by eating and drinking with anger in your heart.

Now that we know the root cause of dissention, how does Jesus tell us to deal with it? He says, “before you come to the altar, if you remember your brother has something against you, go, first be reconciled to your brother and then come to the altar.” For whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Do not keep anger in your heart; do not hold fury in your soul. The first thing to do to bring peace is to repent of your sin and be reconciled with your brother. You have been bought with the blood of God; you are redeemed by the Passion of Jesus

Christ. Jesus suffered death for your sake so that you might die to your sins. His face endured spitting to put an end to your scorn. He drank vinegar to set you apart from wrath. He received stripes so that you would not fear suffering. Walk in your master's footsteps. Endure scorn for your brothers, that you might be the companion of Christ. Show no anger against man that you be not separated from your Redeemer. "Do not grumble against one another so that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door." (James 5:9)

He suffered all injustice, all scorn, all hatred in order to take it away from you. He laid down his life for you in order to pay for all your offenses against God and against your brother. He was rejected by his brothers in order to pay for your brother's offenses against you.

Therefore, by forgiving your brother, make peace with him first, and then come to the altar to receive God's forgiveness. In our liturgy, just prior to receiving the Sacrament, we share the peace of the Lord to each other. This is not just a "minute of friendship." This is a time to go to your brother who has a

grievance against you and ask for his forgiveness. This is the time to go to that brother who has offended you and tell him he is forgiven. “First go, be reconciled to your brother and then come to the Altar,” says Jesus.

The final step, once you have forgiven your brother, is to come to the altar and receive the blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin. For here at the altar you join together with your brothers and sisters in Christ and are all together united in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Here at the altar all who come are shaped and molded into the one, holy Christian church

and the communion of saints, the household of God. As you share this meal with each other, you are being joined together into a holy temple in the Lord. You are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Here at the altar Jesus invites you to come, “all you who are weary and heavy laden;” all who are burdened by guilt and sin; all who want to lay down the sword and live in peace with your brother; come, lay your burdens at the foot of the cross. Jesus lifts up your burdens and carries them to his cross. And at the altar, you pick up the burdens of each other and carry them as your own cross. Here you are

bonded and cemented together in love for one another. Here is where peace is restored between you and God and between brothers and sisters in Christ. That is why we dismiss the communion table with the words, "Depart in peace."

That peace which is the forgiveness of sins and the justification by faith through which you have obtained access to God by grace through faith. For here, in his body sacrificed on the cross and his blood poured out for you, God shows his love for you in that while you were still sinners, Christ died for you.

Therefore, you have now been justified by his blood and saved from the wrath of God.

So if you, or anyone in your family, have wrath in your hearts, are fighting or angry with a brother, then rid yourself of all anger and wrath. Put away all malice and greed. Go, be reconciled with your brother, forgive him of his sins against you and seek his forgiveness for your sins against him. Then come, eat and drink at the altar of God's forgiveness and be renewed in your heart to love one another. Amen.