

Introductory

This text is not read in the TLH one-year series. It is the reading appointed for Pentecost 6A in the LW three-year series. While not a parallel, similar words and thoughts are found in Luke 14: 25-33, which is the appointed reading on Pentecost 16A in the LW and Proper 18B in the LSB respective three-year lectionaries.

We see a dramatic shift taking place at the end of chapter nine and the beginning of chapter ten. At the end of chapter nine, Jesus is said to be doing and saying certain things. At the beginning of chapter ten, He chooses and sends out twelve men who begin to do the same things that He has been doing.

Before they go out, He speaks to them about what they might expect as they go. Review those words, and as they lead to the words for today. Two things are clear; Following Jesus will not be easy, and yet they are assured that the work that they do will be important work, speaking salvific words from God, and they will receive their reward.

This may be a time to build the Christian ethic of the hearer, especially regarding the what a Christian; may expect for life. A lot of Americans have defective expectations for life. Some even think that they should expect happiness all the time, and if not all the time then at least most of the time.

Some Christians think that being a Christian should enhance their happiness quotient and are surprised when it's not or the opposite occurs. That's not what Jesus seems to be saying here, and the more one is involved in the apostolic work of proclaiming Christ, the more His words here apply.

These words, spoken to the Apostles, will generally more deeply apply to those who hold the Apostolic Office of Pastor. At the least, we all had to leave our families to go to school, and upon graduation were sent to the farthest reaches of the country or the world. Some left careers, some of them very good, to go to Seminary.

My parents and siblings and other relatives, have always been both supportive and encouraging of my vocation, but I know a lot of pastors for whom that cannot be said, and some whose parents are hostile to their vocation. I know pastors who are estranged from family on account of their vocation.

Quite likely, the first thing that the hearer will hear when you read this from the lectern is that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, seems to be against peace. If they have no idea of what is

being said here, they might even get the idea that Jesus wants His followers to take up arms in His name, something that Christians have occasionally been known to do.

It ought to be noted that the text, consistent with the rest of the NT, teaches that the Church may be the recipient of, not the administrator of the sword. Christians may and do serve in the military, taking up the sword, but that's a matter of the Kingdom of the Left, and there's nothing inherently sinful about serving one's country in that way.

Theology is often about distinctions, and a distinction must be made here. The Prince of Peace came to bring an end to the theological enmity that had existed between sinful man and Holy God. Because of His work, we are in fact at peace with God, something that the NT talks about a lot and that liturgy reminds us about every Sunday.

But being a Christian means being in conflict with the non-Christian world, which is increasingly the one in which we live. Bernie Sanders spoke for a lot of Americans when he recently characterized the Christian religion and Christians as "hateful" and other not very nice things. I disagree with that, and hence conflict.

Textual Notes

34. The Prince of Peace begins this section by telling the Twelve that they "Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν – should not think that I came to spread peace on the earth. He says that's not the case, and then He adds, "οὐκ ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην ἀλλὰ μάχαιραν – I did not come to spread peace, but a sword."

The verb βαλεῖν, used twice, has the base meaning of throwing something, and it is a deliberate act with purpose, and there is often a certain randomness to it. The purpose of spreading the Gospel is not to spread peace in the conventional way of thinking; everybody just gets along with each other and co-exists in a peaceful manner.

The preaching of the Gospel will bring anything but that, as we can observe in the life of Jesus, in the Early Church, in the Church's entire history up to and including today. It goes back to the Garden and the attack on Adam and Eve by Satan. To be a Christian is to be in conflict with Satan, the world, and the flesh.

Jesus use of "sword" here is synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a part is used to refer to the whole or in some cases the whole to a part. Sentences like; All *hands* on deck. Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your *ears*, breaking *bread*, their god is their *belly*, are other examples of synecdoche, the italicized being the "part" for the whole.

I think there are people out there who would read that paragraph about synecdoche and think the something was askew. Their thinking would be put in a form something like this, "No, Jesus said 'sword,' so it's a sword and nothing but a sword," and then they may tell me that I must not believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

I think the problem, or at least part of the problem, is that we have come to speak of the inerrancy of the Bible by using the word “literal.” The one who takes the Bible “literally” is being a faithful Christian, and those who don’t aren’t. I know this from having had people tell me that I’m not being a faithful Christian.

In fact, if I wish to remain in the good graces of my church body and the people in it, I had better not deny that the Bible is “literally true,” and I don’t. The Bible is literally true, but the Bible is filled with all kinds of figures of speech, things that are not, by definition, “literally true.” How often does God use figures of speech in the Bible?

Take a look at Bullinger’s *Figures of Speech in The Bible*. That epic work runs over one thousand pages. Some of those pages – a few of those pages – are used to explain figures of speech, but a great many of them are used to give examples from the Bible. Much of those thousand pages are actual quotes of actual figures, and there are a lot of them.

A good way to learn to insert figures of speech into your sermon is to insert figures of speech into your sermon. Write it out, in your head or on paper, and then ask yourself how you could make that sentence or paragraph not only more interesting, but more understandable by using a figure of speech.

35. In fact, Jesus says, “ἦλθον γὰρ διχάσαι – I came to divide” families. Reading through this section, we note the preponderance of the word “κατα – against” and the use of personal pronouns in this sentence, indications that this is not going to be pleasant, but confrontational, and not detached, but personal.

I know people who will tell you that they like confrontation, but I don’t believe them. There was no confrontation in Paradise, because all the humans were in synch with God. Since they have gotten out of synch – after the Fall – conflict has been constant. There will be no conflict in heaven, where we will be back in synch with God.

Conflict is a result of the fall into sin, and the Natural Man wants his and doesn’t really care if you get yours or not, and he will take yours if he can. Put that thought into the context of nations and world and you have the concept of war. Since the fall, there has never been a shortage of conflict and war.

The verb διχάζω – to divide, is a hapax in the NT, and it means to cut into two parts that are diametrically opposed to one another. There is an either/or quality to the word, and the Christians were faced early on with the teaching that there is One God, and He does not allow for worship of any other gods, and that put them at odds with everybody else.

Most of the first Christians were Jewish converts, and the way this would have played out for them would have looked something like this; was Jesus the Christ, or The Bastard? Did His miracles offer proof of His Divinity, or did they show Him to be Beelzebub? Did He rise from the dead, or was it all a big lie?

As they moved into and among the pagans, they would find themselves in conflict with the state in the form of the Roman Empire. When accused of being a Christian, either you burned the incense, prayed to the Emperor, and cursed Jesus, or you refused to do the first two and instead declared that Jesus is blessed. About as subtle as a freight train.

The way these religious splits take place these days is much more subtle than the train. Although I have known of sons and daughters of Christian parents who have outright rejected the Faith and even become Atheist, conflict over Jesus more often is about the son or daughter who went ELCA or RC or Protestant.

I was raised in my LCMS church to think of those other church bodies and members in terms of “they’re Christians too,” which they are, with the idea that LCMS was just one brand among many competing brands, all of which have merit, none of which are inherently better or worse than the others.

It is this thinking – and it has been passed down from pastors to parishioners – more than anything has given us a generation – the children of the Greatest Generation – who wonder why these young pastors don’t get it. “Sure, my son is ELCA now, but he was confirmed here, and they’re still Lutheran.”

Or, “Yes, our daughter is RC, but they’re Christians too. Are you saying that he/she is not a Christian?” At this point the pastor finds himself *κατὰ* the family, who quickly close ranks *κατὰ* him. Stand firm, continue catechesis, talk about these things from the pulpit, and if you keep having those conversations, try harder.

I have a brother who is RC and has raised his children RC. He knows that I am *κατὰ* his religion, and he knows why. I have another brother who is a pastor at the Big Box church. He also knows what the first one knows. We get together regularly at family gatherings and we are brothers.

We talk about a lot of things, and sometimes we talk religion. We understand who we are and what we believe, and we also understand that we are and always will be brothers. My Big Box brother was ordained last week. I wore street clothes, was greeted warmly by him and his family, sat in the audience, and had cake and punch afterwards.

And even though they disagree with the religious beliefs of a couple of their children, my LCMS parents have and had the same love for those two sons as for the two LCMS pastor sons. I have also seen it, as have you, where the staunch LCMS man will think it only meet and right that children ought to be disowned should they switch churches.

I don’t think that’s the way to go.

36. In fact, Jesus warns, your greatest enemy may be under one’s own roof; “καὶ ἐχθροὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οἱ οἰκιακοὶ αὐτοῦ – and enemies of the man his households.” There are no two words more diametrically opposed one to another than *ἐχθροὶ* (enemies) and *οἰκιακοὶ* (households). Normally, your enemy is against you. Your household is not – normally.

The household included father, mother, and children. Depending on the family, it also may have included the previous generation and even in-laws. Domestic servants and slaves were common, and they and their families would have been included. It was a group that shared a lot of common interest and they pulled together for strength.

The Christian religion often tore the household apart. If the patriarch converted, the entire household would convert. Several times such a thing is recorded in Acts, and in those cases, Christianity became an even stronger unifying force. If the stray woman or slave converted, however, it could for them be problematic.

People living in the same house know each other well, and in the Early Church your betrayer often came from within the house. There have always been stories out of the former Soviet Union and there are stories today of children, in places that do not well tolerate Christians, betraying their Christian family members to the authorities.

37. He now speaks specifically to the parent and child relationship, speaking of “φιλῶν... ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος – loving...above me is not worthy of me.” The verb φιλῶν is a present active participle of the verb for familial love. Of course, parents and children ought to love one another, but they ought to love Jesus more.

Children, love your parents, and parents, love your children, but if push comes to shove, then the Christian must choose Jesus over family, and if you don't, then you are not ἄξιος (worthy). The Christian who does not love Jesus more than family does not deserve to be called a Christian, and is not fit for the rewards given to the Christian.

A word study reveals that ἄξιος has to do with fairness and justice, and particularly of things where the fairness of a thing is obvious. If you ask a fellow pastor to cover for you while you are on vacation, it would seem reasonable that you would be willing to cover for him while he goes on vacation. If you buy something, you pay for it, and the like.

This is harsh language, and as noted above, is very personal. Jesus is instructing His disciples on a subject that is off-limits to discussion; your interactions with your family. Go ahead. Try to tell a parishioner that they could maybe, possibly at least think about doing something just a little bit different in their child-raising and see what happens.

Here Jesus speaks very bluntly about the possibility that you may have to leave family behind, and says that if you aren't able or willing to do that, then you are not worthy of Him, and that's only fair, and that should be obvious. He is going to give His everything, even His life for you.

Since Jesus is going to give His everything, even His life for you, and since God has so richly blessed you, and since He has chosen you out of the billions of people in the world to be saved, and in the case of pastors chosen you to be so privileged as to handle the saving Word, doesn't it seem right that you should be willing to choose Him over family?

When I talk about doing a “word study,” I’m talking about looking first in BAG and MM, to see how they define a word, and to see examples of how the word is used. A word is defined by the way that it is used. We have to look no further than the word “gay” to see how quickly and dramatically the definition of a word can change.

Having looked at the lexicons, I look in the MG Concordance to see how the word is used, first by the author, and then in the rest of the NT. The way that the word is used by the particular author is generally more important because sometimes particular authors use a particular word in a particular way, a universal truth of writing.

When you have gotten a deeper understanding of the meaning of a word by doing this, pass that along to your hearers, so that they too can gain a deeper understanding. Simply tell them about your word study, and how the word is used in (fill in the blank), and that means...Or you can leave the books on the shelf and do all that on the Internet.

As we look ahead, we note at this point that Jesus is using the figure of speech known as Climax - The arrangement of words or thoughts in order of increasing importance, or in this case of increasing severity. For example; "I think we've reached a point of great decision, not just for our *nation*, not only for all *humanity*, but for *life* upon the earth...

That was George Wald, as quoted in WIK. Other examples; *Lost, jaded, broken, dead* within an hour...These are *life, liberty*, and the *pursuit of happiness*...There are three things that will endure: *faith, hope, and love*. But the greatest of these is love." Shakespeare, The Declaration of Independence, and the Apostle Paul.

38. Jesus began last week by speaking in general terms of family members betraying other family members. Now He speaks more specifically and more personally about other types of relationships and what it means to be worthy. Then He talks about loving Him more than you love your parents or your child.

Now, He compels to give your life.

Within the Climax we find another figure of speech, a not unusual occurrence. The phrase “take up your cross and follow me,” is an Idiom – a saying that is understood by people in one particular group or culture, but that makes no sense to people of another. We use idiom all the time, and don’t even think about it.

Some examples of Idiom; You need to get it through your head (American)...You need to get your head around (British)...You want a piece of me?... He has a chip on his shoulder...144,000...Satan will sift you as wheat...It’s easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle...You can’t pour new wine into old wineskins.” www.idiomsite.com

The Idiom, “take up your cross and follow me,” is one common in all Western Christian countries, and the meaning of Jesus is clear; to be a Christian means that you should expect pain, suffering, even death because you are a Christian. Outside of the context of the Christian religion, the saying makes no sense.

About taking everything in the Bible literally, in the sense of literally, I once knew a Christian who literally built a literal cross literally out of wood, and then he literally put little literal wheels on the bottom, literally put the other end of the cross on his shoulder, and literally carried it up and down the streets of his small hometown.

That doesn’t sound like something I would want to do.

39. Jesus now cranks it up yet another notch, speaking of the most personal of all personal topics, the very life of the Christian. He wants is. ὁ εὐρών τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολέσει αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ ἀπολέσας τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ εὕρήσει αὐτήν – He finding his life loses it, and he who loses his life because of me will find it.”

That is yet another figure of speech, the oxymoron, a figure of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas or terms are combined; “Freezer Burn...Civil War...Sweet Sorrow... The silence was deafening.” The one who has been made aware of the normal life, the one lived with God, will then lose the abnormal life, the one lived without God.

We note that the “life” Jesus wants is not our ζωή, not our βίος, but our ψυχὴν; our entire being, all that we are, all who we are. Jesus does not desire your interest only occasionally or when you feel like it. Being a follower of Jesus is a full-time position! (See VINE for a study of the use and meaning of the Greek words for “life.”)

40. Speaking of the reception they can expect, He says “Ὁ δεχόμενος ὑμᾶς ἐμὲ δέχεται, καὶ ὁ ἐμὲ δεχόμενος δέχεται τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με – the one receiving you (pl) received me, and the one receiving me receives the One who sent me,” the Father sent the Son, who sent the Apostles, and some will receive them, others not.

The verb “δέχομαι – to receive” recurs several times in vv. 40-41, mostly in participle form. It’s a word used most often in the NT to describe the positive, not the negative reception of a good thing. It is also often used to indicate hospitality, somebody welcoming another, regardless of the goodness of that person, into their midst.

The word Jesus uses in relating that the Father sent Him is ἀποστέλλω, the word that Jesus uses when He sends the Apostles. Ultimately, the reception or rejection of these men is a reception or rejection of the Father, as well as the Son. They should not, take it personally, something of which pastors need to be reminded occasionally.

Consider yourself reminded.

41. He acts like these men are prophets or something. Maybe that’s because they are prophets or something. A prophet is one who proclaims God’s Word in a variety of

ways, words that may or may not be predictive and that may or may not include proclamation from the pulpit.

In Acts 2:17, during his Pentecost sermon, Peter quotes from Joel that “...your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” Later on, in Acts 21:9, we are told that Phillip “had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.” They are not called “prophets,” and they did not climb into the pulpit. They talked to people about Jesus, and that’s a good thing.

Jesus speaks of these men as prophets, and says that they are carrying on the work begun by the OT prophets, who are all now dead. Those who received the word of the OT prophets for what it was, God’s Own Word, received the same reward as them. The same prophetic office continues on these days in the pastoral office.

Those who receive the word of these men for what it was, God’s Own Word, received the same reward as them. Those who receive the word of those who continue this prophetic and apostolic work will receive the same reward as them. The same holds true today. The reward, of course, is heaven.

Besides calling them “prophets,” Jesus calls them “righteous.” The two go together, and the prophet who does not act like a Christian does more harm than good to the Kingdom. In the same way, the pastor who glosses himself “confessional” because he says the right words from the pulpit or in the classroom, but doesn’t act like a Christian...

He ends by saying, “δεχόμενος δίκαιον εἰς ὄνομα δικαίου μισθὸν δικαίου λήμψεται – the one receiving the righteous in the name of a righteous man will receive the reward of righteous.” He uses the verb λαμβάνω, not δέχομαι, to talk about the manner of getting the reward of which He speaks.

The form λήμψεται is future indicative active, and it means that one will aggressively and enthusiastically snatch up and grab hold of what is being offered and given. You have no doubt seen this, as every pastor has seen it, the person who for the first time hears The Word in its truth and purity, and not only receives it, but receives it enthusiastically.

42. Jesus now talks about children and adults, “καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ποτίσῃ ἓνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων ποτήριον ψυχροῦ μόνον εἰς ὄνομα μαθητοῦ - and whoever should give to one of these little ones only a cup of water in the name of a disciple.” He does not use the generic word for children, or any of the more age-specific names for children.

He uses the word μικρῶν, and every time that form of μικρός is used in the Bible, it is referring to humans, most notably in Matthew 18, where Jesus talks about the μικρῶν “who believe in me.” When I talk about μικρῶν, I may explain that the Greek language has the general name for children and also age-specific words, like the English language.

I will then talk about such things as the microwave oven and the Remington micro-screen razor or any other word that has “micro” in it to further communicate that we’re talking

about pretty small people. Scientists Ryan and Allison confirm what the ISP Rockford lab was unable to confirm; it's the smallest of all units of measurement.

The reference to these μικρῶν as ones who have faith is a clear indication that infant faith is indeed a possibility in the mind of Jesus, and we know that it is. And if we think the "cup of water" is just a cup of water – and it *is* a cup of water – then we're missing the big picture, a double entendre.

The μικρῶν need cup of water, but what they really need is a cup of water with the correct words attached to make that cup the Sacrament of Baptism. And if you do that, then "ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἀπολέσῃ τὸν μισθὸν αὐτοῦ - truly, I say to you that you will never, ever lose your reward."

Law/Gospel

Worthy/Not – Of ourselves, we are worthy of nothing, as we confess in the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. However, Jesus is worthy, and His worthiness is counted to us by faith.

Cross/Crown – Like Jesus, bear the cross here and now, receive the crown there and then.

Sword/Peace – The sword is symbol of war and violence, the lot of man in the fallen world, and often the lot of the Christian just for being a Christian, something of which Americans need to be reminded almost constantly. In the midst of this world of violence and death, the Christian lives in that peace that passes all understanding, and looks forward to the time of perfect peace in heaven.

Lose Life/Gain Life – The price of Jesus may involve giving one's life for the sake of the Faith, as Stephen did, and as many after him have done. To people who have already given their all to Christ, who have "lost their lives," being killed is really not that big of a deal, as their dying words often communicate. They know that death for the Christian is nothing but the portal to life, one through which we all must pass.

Lose Family/Gain Family – Being a Christian may damage or even destroy one's relationship with family, causing pain, suffering, and aloneness. Being a Christian means that you have a new family, the family of God. This may not be a perfect family, but a family it is nonetheless. Christians could do better modeling the ideal of Christiann Family. Robert Frost said, "Home is the place where, if you have to go there, they have to take you in." He wasn't talking about the Church, but I am.

Rejection/Reception – It is the lot of Christians to be rejected by the World, the same fate experienced by Jesus. The more a Christian acts and talks like a Christian, the more he will be rejected. Not to worry. Jesus said not to fear those who can kill our bodies,

but to fear the One who can cast body and soul into hell. We are comforted in the knowledge that God has received us, and will one day receive us into everlasting bliss.

Sermon Titles

Jesus' Family Values

Costs and Benefits

Costs and Rewards

Family Matters

Fighting Words from The Prince of Peace

The Oxymoron Nature of Christianity

Hymns

Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure – LSB 533

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word – LSB 655

The Son of God Goes Forth to War – LSB 661

Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You – LSB 668

Songs from the *Church Triumphant* Section

Songs from the *Trust* Section

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, Iowa

Resources

ACC – Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Matthew)*.
Intervarsity Press, 2002

BAG – Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Translated by
William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press, 1979

BCLY – William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*. The Westminster Press, 1975

FGG – James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*. Concordia Publishing House, 1993

GBS – Jeffrey Gibbs, *Concordia Commentary, Matthew*, CPH, 2006

GND – Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*, Eerdmans, 1982

MGM – W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, H.K. Moulton, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*. T & T Clark LTD., 1978

MM – James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982

ODCC – F.L. Cross, Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford University Press, 1978

RNK – Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1976

RSV – Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Zondervan Publishing House, 1965

SCR – David Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church*, CPH, 2004

UBD – Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, 1977.

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VINE – W.E.Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., *An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984

WIK – www.wikipedia.com

BIB – www.biblos.com

GBO – www.greekbible.com

Digital Classics Library - www.perseus.tufts.edu

Internet Classics Library – www.classics.mit.edu

Christian Classics Ethereal Library - www.ccel.org

Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html

