

"Ready to be Hated?"

Text: Matthew 10:21-22, 26-33

Grace, mercy and peace be multiplied to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Ambassadors of the One True God:

James "Mad Dog" Mattis (who currently serves as the US Secretary of Defense) faced something of a dilemma earlier in his career. As commander of the First Marine Corps Division, he wanted to communicate to those resisting the American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan that not only was resistance a profoundly ill-advised idea, the opposite was also true. He wanted to let the enemy know that the soldiers under his command could be relied upon to risk their lives in the defense of their friends and allies. The motto he came up with can now be seen on bumper stickers all across this country and wherever the Marine Corp is assigned to serve. It reads simply:

"United States Marine – Your Best Friend, Your Worst Enemy"

You have to admit, the slogan communicates both sides of the Marine Corps.

Most of you know someone like that, someone who is a true and loyal friend, but who would also make a very, very bad enemy. Yet no matter who on earth might fit such a description, it applies nowhere more accurately than with God himself. To resist God, the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth, is to create absolutely the worst kind of enemy. Yet that same God can also be the best possible friend and ally, as is certainly known by all those who now call that same God "Father" through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ.

Yet how can anyone ever know which is which. How can any of us know when he is struggling against God and when not? How can we know when God is our friend and ally, and when we have made him our most terrifying enemy? Our text for this morning supplies answers. That text is found recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, the Tenth Chapter:

^{ESV} **Matthew 10:21-22, 26-33** *Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved... ²⁶ ¶ "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the*

hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² 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.

So far the Word of our God. This is really the only trustworthy guide when asking a question like the one posed in our introduction. Only God's Word can teach us which of our actions are God-pleasing and which are not. That our God would bless our study of these holy, perfect, inspired words this morning, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

Would you rather have someone hate you and never tell you, or tell you they hate you but never really mean it? Interesting question, isn't it? I'm guessing the answer would depend on how you, personally, are wired. Some of us want to live in a happy bubble of ignorance; others insist on reality – even when that reality is unpleasant in the extreme. One thing we can probably all agree on: *no one wants to be hated.*

I don't care who you are, no one will ever be able to make a convincing argument that he or she really wants to be hated by another human being. Even those who hate typically want to be loved in return.

Our Lord once spoke to his disciples about "hating," and he did so in a most unusual context: (Luke 14:26-28, 33) **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?... ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.**

"Counting the cost" of discipleship also includes dealing with hatred – from two very different perspectives: your own and that of others toward you.

The Bible uses the word "hatred" in a couple of different ways. The passage above is probably using the word in a comparative sense, where it means *"to love someone or something less than someone or something else."* In other words, God is not there telling us to have a loathing for our loved ones, but to love them less than we love him. That's not, however, the way "hate" is used in our text. There the word is used as we commonly understand it: *"a feeling of intense or passionate dislike or revulsion."* So we ask the question again: *"Are you ready to be hated by the world around you? Are you ready to be loathed and despised?"*

Christians tend to accept Christ's call to **"take up our cross and follow him"** only in the abstract; that is, only when we think of it in general, non-specific, impersonal terms. We don't tend to deal with specifics nearly as well. In other words, we don't tend to get all that concerned when Jesus tells us that we will experience hardship here on earth, but that bravado tends to disintegrate when we are faced with concrete, personal examples.

In the area of hatred that means, on the one hand, coming to grips with the fact that it is sinful idolatry to love anyone or anything more than God. Still not specific enough? It is a sin to love your precious child or grandchild more than God – to love your parents, your spouse, your best friend more than God. But that's still not specific and personal enough, is it? It means being prepared to remove your beloved child or grandchild from your inner family circle if they give themselves over to sin or turn away from the Christian faith. It includes being willing to alter all of your words and actions in a truly loving attempt to turn the most precious souls in your life from their sin and unbelief.

More to the point this morning, it means being willing to accept the hatred, the loathing, and the rejection of even those closest to your heart for bringing God's Word, both law and gospel, into their lives at those times when they absolutely do not want to hear it. Are you ready for that?

Jesus spoke the words of our text to the 12 apostles as he sent them out into the world as his witnesses. They would break no laws, hurt no one, deprive no one, say nothing untrue, and yet Jesus assured them that they would be hated by all: **Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death,**²² **and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.**

That then is the element of **"counting the cost"** and **"taking up the cross"** that we examine this morning. *Are you really ready and willing to be hated by the world – even if "the world" should include those nearest and dearest to you?*

Profoundly sobering question, isn't it? In fact I would suggest that if you do not find this whole topic intensely disturbing, then you're not thinking about it clearly or honestly enough. Again, no human being wants to be hated. We are hard-wired with a desire to be loved, admired, respected. And yet Jesus here tells us that the job description of every single Christian includes not only enduring the hatred of every single element of the unbelieving world, but actually going out and saying and doing the very things that will make that hatred a reality – at times including even those closest to your heart.

Now, if you are anything like me, you may be experiencing a troubling disconnect here. You may well be thinking, *"But I am already a Christian and I have experienced little or none of the hatred Jesus promised. Why is that?"*

Two answers: First, you really don't know how the world feels about you. Second, if you and I really are experiencing no animosity from the unbelieving world around us it is because we are, for the most part, hiding. The fact is we tend to live and move in the clever camouflage of the world; that is, we act and speak and dress and move about just like everyone else around us. We have become very good at fitting in, at remaining invisible to God's enemies. Practically speaking, that means that when we hear that someone is living in sin, we hide in our silence. When we hear someone talking about how *"good people will all go to heaven,"* we deafen the conversation with our stillness. Even when other nominal Christians articulate a belief that is thoroughly non-Biblical, we switch on our own personal cloaking device, reasoning that – whatever the setting or circumstance – it is neither the time nor the place to start an argument or to create discord or animosity.

There are two realizations at work here in every Christian heart. The first is the instinctive understanding that to actually speak up and speak out would accomplish the very thing our Savior said it would: the pure, unmitigated hatred of the world around us. We fear that hatred; we dread it like the plague. And yet the second realization is also at work, which is that speaking up and speaking out also accomplishes something else: human souls are rescued, saved, delivered, won. These two truths continually war within us.

Why would Jesus, the Prince of Peace, advocate such discord? Why would the very embodiment of divine love ever encourage or even *compel* us to be the creators of conflict? Why would he tell us, his beloved children, to do what he knows would cause others to hate us? Three reasons. First, because he knows that that hatred already exists in the heart of every unbeliever, at times lying dormant, but always present. Second, because he knows that there is no other way to address unbelief, no other way to rescue sinners. Third, he knows that there is also a personal element in all of this, since God has made it clear that *our own souls* are at risk when we struggle to blend in with the world.

Anecdotal evidence abounds of deep cover agents inserted into the United States by the Soviets during the Cold War. These men and women were extensively trained to speak, act, and think exactly like Americans, and to go about their lives in the United States ever ready to heed the call to action from the motherland. What happened to a significant number of them is that their acting became reality. Mentally and emotionally they became Americans and refused to obey the command of their former country when it finally came – this despite the meticulous vetting and training process where only the most dedicated and patriotic individuals were sent.

The same thing happens to Christians. Live long enough in the world as a deep-cover actor only pretending to love the world, and that love and allegiance for the world eventually becomes our reality.

Our text spells out the advantages of the other scenario – where Christians strip off their camouflage and actually **"say in the light what Christ said in the dark"** and **"proclaim on the housetops what we once heard whispered."** The result is that God, your friend and ally, works in and through you – not only strengthening you but saving others. Our text assured us: **"Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."** The only hatred, the only animosity that we cannot possibly bear up under is that of our Heavenly Father. He, again, is the one enemy that we simply cannot afford.

So then what is the goal here? What is the point or purpose of Christ's words in our text? Does he say this to terrify us into compliance? Are these words recorded to frighten us so terribly that we finally do what he wants out of abject fear or dread that if we don't, we won't be saved? Or is the point to make us think that we only have his love when we are doing what he wants us to do? Obviously none of the above. Our text is addressing the evil that is all around us – *and within us*. It addresses the evil that will certainly engulf and destroy us if it is ignored. In this there can be nothing kind or gentle. That evil must feel only the hammer of God's law – words in our text like these: **"Whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."**

To rightly understand where our Lord is coming from here we need to take a step back and see – really *see* – the big picture. Why did Jesus come to earth in the first place? To save fallen mankind by sacrificing himself in our place. That's the beauty of the gospel. Jesus Christ did everything necessary to pay for the sins of the world. His goodness is credited to us through faith, not by anything we do or don't do. Since Jesus' sin payment is an accomplished fact, the only sin that can now damn is unbelief, and the best way to perpetuate unbelief is through ignorance. Man cannot believe what he never hears or knows. Satan's plan then becomes obvious: persuade Christians to shut up and blend in, and millions of souls will die in their ignorance.

How then could a loving God *not* seek to crush this sin, this unbelief, with the hammer of his law? He loves souls too much to allow them to slip quietly into the night of eternal darkness and unspeakable torment. So also pray this morning that our God would not only show you your own personal problem here, but remove it. Pray for the courage to **"come out from them and be different."** Pray for the courage to be **"salt"** and **"light."** Pray for the spirit of those who went before, like Jeremiah – that spirit whereby even when he tried to remain silent, he could not, saying: **"...there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."**

Above all, thrill once again this morning to the incredible truth that you have a God who, knowing how naturally sinful every single one of us was in absolutely every aspect of our lives, still he loved us enough to sacrifice his own Son to rescue and save us. Let then even this past failure fill your heart with the joy of full and complete forgiveness through faith alone in Jesus Christ. As you struggle to purge all evil from your life, use the very fact of that evil to magnify God's grace. Use it as added cause to thank and praise him for the fact of your forgiveness, your eternal salvation, and marvel anew at the love of God for sinners like you and me. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Exodus 19:2-8** They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." ⁷ ¶ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

^{ESV} **Romans 5:6-15** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. ¹² ¶ Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned-- ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵ ¶ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

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The Second Sunday after Pentecost – June 18, 2017

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 8 (Red Hymnal)

"Father, Who the Light This Day"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Exodus 19:2-8) Our Old Testament lesson is a rather rare example of a two-sided covenant in the Bible. Here God offered Israel national independence and prosperity on the condition that they keep His commandments and continue to honor Him as the one true God. Had Israel followed through on their side of the agreement, God would certainly have carried out His. This covenant was, of course, broken by the Jews.

Psalm 100 (Supplement page 35) (Brown Hymnal)

The New Testament Lesson: (Romans 5:6-15) Though it is true that God established a two-sided covenant with the nation of Israel, that covenant did not involve the earning of heaven. The Jews, however, came to believe that they could indeed earn heaven by their "good works." Clearly they could not, as Paul so clearly teaches in our New Testament lesson.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 414 (Red Hymnal)

"The Man Is Ever Blest"

The Sermon – Text: Matthew 10:21-22, 26-33 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)

"Ready to be Hated"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 430 (Stanzas 1-4, 7-8) (Red Hymnal)

"What Is the World to Me?"

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 651 (Stanzas 1-2) (Red Hymnal)

"Be Still My Soul"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (43) Ave (46)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/Coffee Time
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship w/Communion
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Picnic

CLC News – Teacher Quinn Sprengeler has returned the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne. St. Luke's of Lemmon has called Pastor James Albrecht. Joshua Ohlmann has accepted the teaching call to Grace of Sleepy Eye. Mrs. Rebecca Lillo has accepted the call to be the second teacher at St. Stephen Lutheran School, Mountain View CA. Messiah of Eau Claire has called Teacher Amy Mielke.

Church Picnic – Our annual Church Picnic is scheduled for next Sunday immediately following the worship service. The location is again the Jaycees Park on Century. The main dish (chicken) and drinks will be provided. Everyone is asked to bring all the other good stuff that makes a picnic a picnic. Please see Cindy or Sandy if you have any questions.

Pastoral Conference Resolution – Copies of the resolution concerning the Joint Statement passed by the CLC Pastoral Conference this past week in Eau Claire are available on the mailbox table. The 2016 CLC Convention directed the Pastoral Conference to study the final draft of the Joint Statement and to bring a recommendation to the 2018 Convention. This statement was drafted as fulfillment of that directive. In general, the Statement in its current form was deemed by the Pastoral Conference to lack sufficient clarity. Pastor Roehl will provide a brief overview following the service this morning.

Congratulations – Congratulations to Jerrel Gullickson and LaVon Schoon, who were married at St. Luke's of Lemmon yesterday afternoon. Pastor Roehl conducted the service. Mr. and Mrs. Gullickson will be living in the Bismarck area.