

The Difficult Path Ends Well

Promise: the world will be put right and repentant sinners forgiven

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Jer 28:5-9; Pas 119:153-160; Rom 7:1-13; Matthew 10:34-42
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“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”— Mt 10:34

Lead In – In our First Lesson Jeremiah says of the prophets who were before him that they “*prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms.*” Our Lord Jesus could also speak in this way. And that is exactly what He is doing in our Gospel Lesson this morning. So, how is it that the one named *Prince of Peace* could say that He did not come to bring peace, but a sword? It will be worthwhile for us to consider this seeming contradiction...

I. There Are Two Major Ways God’s Word Speaks

- A. God’s will, His intentions, His commandments...
- B. God’s righteous judgment, word of condemnation...
- C. Word of love, rescue, forgiveness, and promise...

II. One Does Not Attain, But Maintains, Balance

- A. Bicycles, tight ropes, standing on one foot, etc...
- B. The proud and the complacent need to hear...
- C. The humble and broken need to hear...

III. We Are Message Bearers

- A. Sometimes they shoot the messenger...
- B. Jesus did not promise an easy path...
- C. Fulfilled rewards, and the more immediate ones...

Final Word – People followed Jesus. They followed Him from all walks of life, and from very many different circumstances. Despite the fierce opposition to Jesus from many of the authorities, people still followed Him. Despite rebukes that could cut to the core, people still followed Him. Despite being frank about the most difficult path ahead, people still followed Him. Despite His radical demands of undivided allegiance, people still followed Him. Why? They saw His compassion and love on display everywhere. There was a resonance of truth in what He said. And what He promised was extraordinary. And His death and third day resurrection would confirm it all and provide mankind’s greatest hope. Friends, the difficult path...

Je 28:8 The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms.

Is 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Ex 20:2-3 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before me.”

Ac 17:30-31 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Heavenly Father, far from telling us that it would be an easy path without any difficulties, Your Son was forthright that following Him might even cost us our physical lives. Embolden us to see that anything we lose along the way would have been lost anyway; and that the gain in the end will far outweigh any loss and that the reward is greater than anything we could ever image. Lord God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts... Amen.

Matthew 10:34-42 ESV

Not Peace, but a Sword

³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Rewards

⁴⁰ “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Ro 7:7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.

Ps 73:6-9 Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. ⁷ Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. ⁸ They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. ⁹ They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.

Ez 18:23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

“The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.” - G.K. Chesterton, What’s Wrong with the World.

Mt 7:13-14 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Immediate Rewards: removal of weight of sin and guilt // meaning and purpose // community