

6 Pentecost A—June 22, 2008
Matthew 10:24-39
The Rev. David R. Wilt

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” I really thought long and hard about this one and was very tempted to take the easy way out and talk about Vacation Bible School; 80 children laughing, playing, singing, learning. An almost equal number of volunteers throughout the week, doing everything from sweeping floors to acting out skits.

FROG: Rivet, Rivet

DRW: Excuse me?

FROG: Its William, where is everybody? Where are all the Kids?

DRW: Bible School is over, the children have gone back to Their parents. They are in their own churches this Morning.

FROG: Their own churches? I thought there was just one Church.

DRW: Well that’s a problem William. Many people think There is only one church. And that is the one they Think is right.

FROG: Well darn I was “hopping” we could all get along.

DRW: Well I think that is what Jesus would want us to do But it will take some time

**FROG: It will take a huge "leap" of faith if you ask me. I'm
Outta here. Rivet, Rivet, Rivet**

DRW: Your right William a huge leap of faith.

Throughout the week, as I watched the kids, the thought would run through my head where's the sword? And, at the closing luncheon I got a glimpse of perhaps what Jesus was referring to as the sword.

A mother came up to me and thanked me for the week her child had experienced. (You know as the rector you get credit for a lot of things you had very little to do with, and you get blamed for things you also knew nothing about) Then she said we are members of the Baptist church. And the thought ran through my mind of some of the classic differences in scriptural interpretation that we have with some of our Baptist brethren. And I wondered if the child began to share with his mother what he had learned this week, from Episcopalians, about Choices---Believing, Acting, Forgiving, Obeying and Jesus.

Would this scripture come alive? Would we see glimpses of child versus parent. If this child's mother joyfully shared with her mother-in-law what the child had learned, would this scripture come alive? Would we see glimpses of daughter-in-law versus mother-in-law. (Did you notice that son-in-law versus mother-in-law is not

mentioned in this scripture. Maybe that's one Jesus doesn't even want to tackle)

What I began to see in this passage is a grave reality. The more each of us individually strives to know and to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. The more each of us seeks to understand:

Good and evil

Sin and righteousness

Acceptable behavior and unacceptable

Behavior

The more each of us comes to believe that the Jesus we know is the only Jesus and all others are wrong the deeper those divisions become. Who out there can't think of at least one relative; parent, sibling, cousin, whatever, that religion is just not a topic we want to get into with them if we desire peace in the family.

Historically we saw this tearing apart of families and institutions during the depth of the Vietnam War, that eroded to the point where soldiers who had risked their lives were jeered and spat upon.

You may be thinking that that was an extreme situation that Christians would never get to that level of contempt with each other. But if we believe that we are only fooling ourselves. Any time one group exercises or exhibits a superior knowledge or professes to have an inside track to

the mind of the Almighty the seeds of condemnation, of alienation and of disenfranchisement have been broadly cast into the soil, and will be germinated and watered and left to grow by the very forces of superiority through which they were created

The very presence of Christ, proclaiming that He, not the Scribes, not the Pharisees, not any one human being, but that He is the fulfillment of the law, must always first create division, before through understanding, peace will be allowed to reign.

Sounds pretty dismal doesn't it?

Yet in the first part of this Gospel we are given the key to moving us from dissention to unity. From separation to community and into communion with all of God's children.

Jesus said, "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master: it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master.

Churchill Gibson, the longtime Chaplain at Virginia Seminary said one time that one of two things happens when someone is ordained—They grow or they swell. It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher; Learning, growing, coming always into deeper knowledge and understanding.

On this past Monday I looked at this throng of children, from kindergarteners to 4th and 5th graders, and a chill ran over me as I thought about what I was seeing. Each of these

children's parents had left their most important possession in our care. They had left in our sanctuary the equivalent of the widow's mite. We could help them grow and grow ourselves, or we could swell up and profess to have divine vision and guidance. And as I went about to each of the classrooms it was abundantly clear that we had chosen to grow, and in doing so had offered the invitation to each of these children to grow, with us, into the likeness of the Master--Jesus Christ our Lord

If there is to be peace on earth, let it begin with each of us.