

If you have brothers and sisters, were you the instigator or the victim? In the backseat, were you the one picking on your brothers and sisters or were you the one being picked on? Sure minivans have all but eliminated the problem for smaller families, but it used to be that the backseat provided the best place to get on each other's nerves. Poking, touching, waving, and generally causing problems for each other. It started out relatively quiet. But quickly it got too loud for mom and dad in the front. So they would yell to quiet down. And what was the solution? Put a line down the middle and everybody stay on your side.

Nations could stand to follow the same advice. The lines have already been drawn. If everyone would just stay on their side there would be peace. People in communities should remember too. Everybody has their personal space, a home, an apartment, and cars. If we respect that, stay to our side there will be peace. But of course that's not the way it works. We haven't seen peace like that in this world, ever. And we never will. We can't have peace no matter what we do or say.

Jesus saw this all happening. He predicted a world where peace would be impossible. Instead, people would be so desperate for some kind of peace they would do whatever it took to achieve it, even compromising their beliefs. Unfortunately that peace comes at a great cost. In the gospel for today Jesus says Christians operate differently. For us it's...

**No peace at any price  
Division better than compromise  
Christ over family**

Politicians win elections promising they'll go to Washington and fight the establishment. They won't follow the same old patterns. Rather they'll go and fight who they have to and change what they need to in order to get things done. Politicians would never win a race if they said they were going to fight the public. That's a little bit like what Jesus sounds like. **"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"** Jesus is not talking about fighting the establishment. This fire is going to affect everybody. How can he talk like this?

As Jesus walked the earth he knew there was only one way for him to get back to heaven, one way to solve humanity's division of the earth. A passionate fire to solve humanity's sin problem was already burning in his belly. Soon it would be on full display. What moment in Jesus' life caused so much passion, amazement, and controversy that it brought fire to all the earth? The cross.

If you thought Jesus was all about peace, love, and harmony think again. The cross is confrontation. Look at it; it's an instrument of death. One man's death for all people. But not everybody wants someone to die for them. They either don't recognize they need it or they don't think they want it. These people don't want a Savior. So they abandon Jesus, stop listening, and walk away. They choose darkness instead of light. They divide themselves from those that love the Savior and live in the light.

The devil wants you to believe choosing compromise is the right thing to do to get peace. At work, with all those people, you want to get along. So sometimes you have to grin and bear it when they talk dirty or when they make crude jokes. Better to put up with it than rock the boat and divide everyone. Compromising to keep peace makes life better now. All too easily we remember the bitterness of life under the cross, the loneliness, the resentment, and the hurt feelings. The devil whispers forget those, be who you are, choose peace. It's better for everyone. Compromise isn't so bad as long as it brings peace.

The cross of Christ is the answer to the devil's compromise. You may not like the suffering the cross brings. But this isn't peace at any price. Instead, there will be no peace at any price. **"Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division."** Jesus knew the cross would divide the world. But it was also the only way for you and me to be saved. He wasn't about to compromise that so you would have a little comfort. He wasn't about to give up on the opportunity to reassure you when death's grip comes. He wasn't going to say sorry I can't help when you lay in the hospital bed. Jesus' love for you wouldn't allow him to stop. Jesus' death on the cross means it's better to be divided than to compromise. Jesus did his work, died his death, and paid the price for your sins. This brought division. But it's better that than him saving you from division but not saving you from hell.

Not all division is bad. Just like roads need a center line to divide them for safety so division keeps you safe. Division from unbelievers says you're following the right path. **"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it."** You want to be divided from the herd of people on their way to destruction. Division keeps you closer to God. Where else will you go when division causes trouble? And division keeps you focused on heaven. Our eyes tend to focus on what we see. If all we would see is peace why would we ever want anything different? So division keeps us looking up, waiting for Christ to return.

It's not that division is better than compromise. Division is the only way. Unbelievers will naturally hate believers because they hate Jesus and his grace. We try and make division easier by thinking of unbelievers as nameless faceless individuals we've never met. But Christ brings this close to home...really close. We aren't just divided from the nameless faceless unbelievers. Division sometimes has a name. It might be right inside your own family.

Division was natural in my family of two men and two women. My dad and I wanting to go to the sporting goods store, mom and sister wanting to shop in Kohls. Guys wanting to watch war documentaries, girls wanting to watch movies. Jesus introduces us to a family of five. **“From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.”** It’s a family, the closest relationship God gives us. Everybody here has a family. No one wants to see families broken up by dividing unless it’s over what to order from takeout on a Friday night. But Jesus says that something will divide us from those who we should be closest to. Again, the cross of Jesus.

Has the cross been the issue that’s come between you and a close loved one? A husband who says believing in that stuff is foolish. A daughter who no longer wants to go to church because it’s easier to go along with the crowd. A son who believed before he went away to college, but now stays away from the topic of faith all together. A daughter-in-law who seems to be corrupting her husband, or a mother-in-law who refuses to accept the Christian discipline you want to give your child. Blood ties to family pose a special danger. When family actively tries to pull us away from Christ it’s bad. But it’s worse when they aren’t actively pulling. Passive non-committal attitudes can be worse. You go if you want, but I don’t care. Division over such an important issue hurts especially when its family.

When you read these words from Jesus are you shocked? **“They will be divided father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”** Jesus seems to be okay with division in family relationships. Not because Jesus hates family, but because nothing can come between you and Christ. Christ must always comes before family. You love your family, but they can’t save you. Jesus alone gave you life by his death, removed your sin and guilt on the cross, and is in heaven today preparing a place for you. Your family might be gone tomorrow. They may be divided with you about the cross. But Christ compels us, urges us, and pleads with us through his Word to follow him even if it means a lost relationship with a loved one.

No earthly relationship can compare to what you have with your Savior. And no earthly relationship can be allowed to cut in on that relationship. Peace seems like the attractive alternative. Compromise always looks better. But peace and compromise that separate us from Jesus is not only dangerous it’s damning. Division is better than compromise because division keeps us connected to Jesus. In our lives with Christ there can be no peace and any price.