

Matthew 10: 36  
Message #2 (8:30 AM) in the series "Whose Verse Is It Anyway?"

Pastor David Wolverton

Well, good morning. Grace and peace to you. In the name of God, our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is so good to be here to share the Word of God with you today. And you selected the verse, and it is Matthew. Chapter 10, verse 36.

*"A man's enemies will be the members of his own household. A man's enemies will be the members of his own household."*

As we go before the Lord, would you join your hearts with me in prayer? Gracious Lord, open up your word to us and open us up to your word. Teach us, Father, what you would have us learn as you can form our lives into the disciples that you have called us to be. All of this farther we pray in Jesus mighty name and our God's people said, Amen.]

I'm here as a representative of Jesus Christ in a world that is purely chaotic. And right now, this verse of scripture, I believe, is descriptive of a lot of households and a lot of churches and a lot of the nations of our world. That brother takes up arms against brother, sister against sister, parent against child, child against child, child against adult. We live in a time of great division, great brokenness, and great conflict. I want to say two things. First, I want to say this should not be a surprise to us. It should not be a surprise for those of us who are followers of Jesus we've been reading about this in our Scriptures. Not much has changed about the human condition from the old to the New Testament and from the New Testament to today. Not much has changed about who we are and the brokenness that is reflected in in each and every one of us, apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, in fact, why Jesus came and why He died. That is the whole point of the gospel. And that is the second thing I want to share with you is that in the midst of all of the chaos, in the midst of all the division, in the midst of all of the brokenness that we are experiencing in our culture today, locally and regionally and globally, we need not fear because the cross of Jesus Christ has created a pathway. A pathway for healing. Now most of you know by now that I was blessed to write and publish a book on conflict in the church. Right? It's a really a profound experience for me to have a published book and every once in a while, I break out my own book and I open it up randomly and I start to read and as I'm reading, I am truly humbled by what I wrote. And I say this really very much aware that it was not me who wrote, but the Holy Spirit who wrote through me because I finish reading a paragraph anytime I do this and I go, who wrote this? This could not have come from me. But the book the book describes a reality that has impacted even the Church of Jesus Christ. And that is the fact that conflict is actually essential for growth. Conflict is essential for growth. That's the basic premise of my entire book, and the premise is rooted in the fact that you cannot grow in your relationship with Jesus unless you allow Jesus to evacuate from your life. The things that are toxic, the things that get in the way of our own discipleship. And in many respects, the things that get in the way of our own discipleship are what we in theological circles would call idolatry. So the premise about conflict as essential for growth really is a is a statement about our own spiritual formation. And so, the more intense the conflict, the more I think God is trying to get our attention and

to give us an opportunity and an invitation to go deeper into our spiritual formation. So, for me, as I observe all of what's going on in our society right now and when I observe it on the local church level, and I see brokenness and division and conflict what I also see is the God who invites us must be doing something really important. If he wants to clean house. Clean house. Matthew. Chapter 10, verse 36, A man's enemies will be the members of his own Household. Household.

It's an interesting verse and really this this one verse doesn't do justice to the entire context. If you remember from last week as we introduced the series, I told you that what we're basically doing is a process of observation, interpretation and application. And when you do observation, it's really important for us to look at what's going on in the passage, what's going on within the context of this particular verse in our case today. Well, Matthew, Chapter 10 is rather interesting. Jesus is actually doing something that we need to pay attention to. So, verse 36 is really only, only part of the story. You've got to back up a little bit and look at chapter 10, verse 1. If you're following along in your Bible and or Bible app, I invite you to just turn a page back and look at chapter 10, verse 1. This is really an important verse to set the stage for our understanding of what Jesus says in verse 36. Verse 1 says.

“Jesus called his 12 disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”]

So, he gave these disciples, these 12 ordinary guys, you know, the pin up guys of our faith. He gave them authority to do something very important. What was that authority to do? To cast out evil spirits. Playfully I want to ask, do you think that those evil spirits did not want to put up a fight? Whether we believe in all of that supernatural language or not the reality of the testimony of Scripture is that wherever Jesus went, He brought about a reaction. And the reaction came simply by virtue of his presence and his authority, the authority of being the son of God embodied in who he was. So wherever he went evil took notice and reacted. Whether that evil was embodied in a person or in a nation or in a religion, we're in a global community. Whenever Jesus comes on to the scene, there's bound to be a fight. Why? Because conflict is essential for our growth and Christ. It's been that way for a long time, in fact. In fact, as you look at Chapter 10, Jesus is equipping those 12 disciples with some teaching, not going to read the whole thing, but just a few other verses to set the stage for what we read in verse 36. So he's called them. He's now given them authority over evil spirits, and he's given them authority to heal, which is also back in the day authority over the things that are toxic, the things that are exemplifying our brokenness as a society and as a human people. And then in verse 16, after giving some all of instructions to these disciples, he says, "I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves." You get the conflict imagery here. Therefore, he says, "be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." How many of you feel like a snake today? How many of you feel like doves? The shrewdness and the innocence actually partner together that we are now not to go out into the world to cause harm, but we are to go out into the world that is harmful and to not be afraid. But with that shrewdness, with the wisdom that is now in us residential in potential by virtue of the Holy Spirit at work in us and through us, we are to go into that dark world, to be ambassadors of light, knowing full well then any time we expose people to the light of Christ, there will be a reaction whether they're

members of our own family or members of our own family of faith. Then he goes on to say, verse 17. "Be on your guard against people. They will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in the synagogues. (18) On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it at that time, you will be given what to say. For it will not be you speaking, but the spirit of your Father speaking through you." Verse 21 This is what he is saying to the disciples to equip them as they are about to be sent out into the world. Jesus says. (21) "Brother will betray brother to death. And a father his child, children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All people will hate you. Because of me.

Yeah. If you were standing there as one of the disciples and listening to Jesus tell you all of these instructions and then he says to you. So have fun. Right? Would you say yes? The harsh reality is he was actually equipping them with a gift, a gift of being able to interpret the surroundings, not by what they saw, not by what they felt, not by what they thought but by who they were in Christ and by virtue of the authority that they now had as ambassadors of hope and love, of grace and forgiveness that was bought for them through what Jesus was about to do. You and I stand 2000 plus years later as those same ambassadors of hope and new life of light that exposes that which is toxic. We are those ambassadors. We are being sent and we are being sent with the authority of having the risen Jesus in us. So, we need not be afraid of what's out there. What we need to be afraid of it's how we, the church, contribute to what's out there.

Let me explain a little bit more as we go on and verse 26, Jesus says to his disciples, after listing out all of this wonderful job description, he says, *"So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known."* Why is that important? The light of Christ exposes everything that needs to be exposed that is getting in the way of our walk with Christ. The light is what exposes. It's not our accusations one with the other. It is the presence of Jesus. For wherever Jesus is, He causes division.

There can be no two masters, He says elsewhere. You got to pick who is going to be lord of your life. You got to pick. Because God will not share His glory with anyone. That's the testimony of the entire canon of Scripture from Genesis through Revelation. Conflict will arise any time Jesus is present. We just have to figure out whether the conflict is good conflict that leads to growth or just us arguing over our preferences.

So, Jesus makes that very clear in verse 32. He says, *"Whoever acknowledges me before people I will also acknowledge them before my Father in Heaven. But whoever disowns me before, people I will disown them before my Father in Heaven."* And then he drops this incredible statement in verse 34, that actually is the basis of why I'm sharing what I'm sharing with you. He says, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword." Maybe you've heard that verse elsewhere in Scripture where we've read 'the word of God is sharper than a double-edged sword.' Jesus is the Word of God. Wherever Jesus is, He causes division. It is by his presence that He separates the treasure of who we are from the darkness that wants to identify us. In the Old Testament we would read time after time in the Book of Kings and Chronicles how there would be kings

leading the people of faith, leading the nation of Israel. Those who did right in the sight of God, God great words of acclamation and those that followed other gods. Well, Scripture reported that they did evil in the sight of the Lord. What was the basis? Idolatry. God will not share His glory with anyone. So as we engage this one verse, it is in the basis of the fact that Jesus didn't come to be that simple peacemaker and giver of peace that everybody seems to think Jesus was about. Yes, he brought peace by dying on a cross. It was violence, unjust violence that bought peace. And he bought it with his own blood. And so, he reminded those disciples that wherever they would go to represent him, conflict will arise. Because that which lives in darkness does not want to be exposed to the light. So sometimes we will do anything including murder to defend our own dysfunction. If they did it to Jesus, they would do it to us. So he says I have not come to bring peace to the earth, but a sword. Verse 35, *"For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter in law against her mother-in-law"* (that we understand, right?) *"A man's enemies will be the members of his own household."* And then he says in verse 37 *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* That segment about a man against his father, daughter against her mother, daughter in law against her mother-in-law; man's enemies will be a members of his own household is actually not new to Jesus. It comes from the Old Testament Book of Micah Chapter 7, and in particular verse 6. But Micah is an Old Testament prophet. He is representing to the voice of God in the midst of Israel in a season when Israel did exactly the same as what we just described throughout Scripture. Israel yet again was rebelling against God by choosing to worship other idols. Now, I know we don't do that today, do we? At least not explicitly in the way that they did it back then, but we still have our idols today. And what Micah was reflecting is that that the patience of God with his people was running thin. And prophetically he was announcing that unless they chose whom they would serve there would be consequences. One way or the other. And Micah was pleading to Israel for Israel to choose God. And unfortunately, he was reflecting the conditions of society.

If you read Chapter 7, it begins with him talking about his own role. He says, *"What misery is mine? I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard. There is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave.* (Verse 2 he says In Micah,) the Godly have been swept from the land. Not one upright person remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood. Each hunts his brother with a net." And there begins a testimony through Micah of the conditions of what Jesus just shared hundreds of years later. And dare I say it? Conditions about the human condition, our human brokenness and division that could be a testimony to today's world. There are some things that we just don't learn. And yet the hope that we have. Is that even in the midst of a polarized society the light of Christ exposes an invitation to Grace, to mercy and to new life?

The Cross of Jesus Christ penetrates through all of that darkness. And Jesus, like he did back in Chapter 10 of Matthew with those 12 original disciples, for us today; He invites us to take the authority that he has given to us as his followers and to go light our world. Knowing full

well that when we go into the midst of our world the very presence of Jesus in and through us will cause a reaction. And that reaction may even divide our families, divide our friendships.

When I was in high school, I developed a really close friendship with a young man. And we became fast best friends. We did a lot of things together. He was a year younger than me. And yet we connected. And also, I was dating a young lady at the time. The relationship broke off, but we stayed connected. And I went off to college. They were both a year behind me back in high school, went off to college, and I started college, as many of you know my story, I started college as a biology major and I was going to be a doctor. So, I was in the pre-med program and God interrupted my life with a call to ministry. And I ended up changing my major midway through the year and changed a lot of things about my attitude and my faith journey. I decided I was going to go home and share that news with my best friend and my former girlfriend. So, I excitedly told them the news. Both of them in their own way called me a Jesus freak. And from that moment forward would have nothing to do with me. There may be a price to pay at any given juncture of our faith step. There may be changes of relationships that will play themselves out because you, today, choose to follow Jesus. There may be changes in your family relationships, in your marriages, in your friendship circles, in your work relationships, there may be significant reactions when people find out that you're a Christian, especially in our culture today, where being a Christian is not politically correct. There will be a price to pay. Because whenever you introduce Jesus, division occurs. It starts within us where his presence in our life begins to separate us from the former ways that we used to live. The former things they used to have a hold on us. The former things that used to enslave us. And then as we're changed, it has a rippling effect on the relationships within our household. Both for good and for challenge. And it will ripple beyond that in all of the different circles that were important.

It's a process in theology that we call sanctification. Where Jesus is making us holy. He's conforming us to his image. And we need to allow that. And then he sends us like those 12 disciples. And he says to us. 'I want you to go out into the world. And to be my ambassadors. And when you do, don't be surprised when people hate you, when people mark you, when people challenge you, when people laugh at you, when people say, 'You're just one of those goody two shoes.' Take it as a compliment. Because the light of Christ is exposing something that's pushing against everything that is toxic in our world.

Instead go forth knowing that the love that you represent, the love that points people to the cross will create a pathway of invitation that may just change another person's life. And that one life from God's perspective is worth it! And so are you! Conflict is essential because Jesus wants to be Lord. Will we let him? Let's pray.

God of grace, God of glory, we trust you. Be the Ambassador of love and grace in our Lord. So that wherever we go, we need not be afraid as to what we will say or what we will do but allow your Holy Spirit to speak and act within us by virtue of the authority that you have placed in us. So, raise up your church, Lord, here in Elizabethtown and throughout the globe for the world is desperate right now. Be Lord and be Lord of us.