

“Hate your family???” by Pastor Steve Sommerer  
 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
 Sermon Text: Luke 14:25-35

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The sermon text is from Luke 14:25-35. *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be My disciple.”*

Hate is a pretty strong word. We don’t even allow that around our kids. What does this mean, and how do we reconcile God’s universal call to love our neighbor with Jesus’ call in our text to hate the neighbor closest to us - our own family? Jesus said, *“Love your enemies.”* Jesus said, *“If you hate someone, you’re guilty of murder.”* Jesus said in Matthew 15: *“Honor your father and your mother.”* So what’s gives?

Sometimes Jesus uses hyperbole to drive home a point. For example, when your eye causes you to sin, Jesus said, *“Pluck it out.”* Your eye doesn’t really cause sin, it’s just Jesus’ way of saying, you’d rather lose your eye than open your heart to sin.

A good rule for reading the Bible is to read tricky passages in light of clearer ones. Parents and kids aren’t free to hate and abuse each other. God said, *“Honor your father and your mother.”* Brothers and sisters and extended family, this text doesn’t give you permission to go home today and hate each other – and for families to become war zones. This is how Matthew 10:37 expressed the same verse about hating father or mother: *“Whoever loves his father or mother, son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”* You see the point isn’t that Jesus wants us to hate anyone, but if the choice is between anything – even family – and God, *“Love God with all your heart.”*

Sometimes, people have real life or death choices. I have heard of Jews who converted to Christ, being disowned by their family... their family even having a ceremonial funeral for the Jewish convert to Christ. They loved God and lost their family. Sometimes homosexuals have insisted either you deny Jesus and reject God’s Word or our relationship is over. Or sometimes when a parent has to help a child choose confirmation or Sunday worship over ball practice or game... a parent has to hate the child, so to speak, to love God’s Word.

The devil perverts it all, of course. He says you’re a hater if you stand with God, but God’s Word is always what’s best for your life. It’s never truly loving to excuse sin or compromise your faith. How does that help anyone? That’s a demonic love.

On an early Sunday morning, 79 year old Floyd Nunley was driving windows down to church in St. Louis. As her car rested at an intersection, a car pulled alongside with three young men. The one in front said, “What’s up OG, don’t get too hot!” In the

next instant another threw a lighted Molotov cocktail through her back window, engulfing her car in flames. Floydra struggled to get the car in park before jumping out of the car.

Once outside, her fellow churchgoers ran to her car and reported having to restrain Floydra because she wanted to go into the flames and retrieve her Bible. They firmly reminded her she could get another Bible. What awes me about that dear senior saint is within seconds of the scariest, most shocking moment of her life, Floydra couldn't restrain herself from spontaneously fighting to save her Bible. The 79 year old hated her life for the sake of Christ's love.

In our text, Jesus teaches us to value the eternal things of God. Not your friends and family, not one other thing in this world will last forever – except faith unto salvation or unbelief to fiery damnation. *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be My disciple.”* He's teaching us that our faith and life in Christ is **THE IMPORTANT THING!** Either your God is the true God, or you'll spend your life avoiding the hard things in life, in search of happiness; and when that gets hard, you'll scrap it all, living for your children or your work or your money or your boats and cars and school friends. Being Christian isn't supposed to be easy. It's carrying the cross. It's denying the one person, you don't really want to deny – yourself.

I'm not suggesting being reckless with your life – and neither is Jesus. But my admiration for that woman is through the roof, because in the literal heat of the moment, without time to deliberate, her thoughts were of God's Word and her Bible. The Old Lutheran Hymnal had a song: *“Oh, for a faith that will not shrink Tho' pressed by many a foe; That will not tremble on the brink Of poverty or woe.”* Life challenges all of us to choose what's most important; when confirmation starts you have to choose between a ball practice here and there or learning about Jesus. Maybe you need to have a talk with that coach! *“As for me and my house,” Joshua said, “we will serve the Lord.”*

At work you might have to choose between honesty and integrity or lies and theft and cutting corners. Don't choose the easy path. Do what's right. When a boy or girlfriend or school friends want you to go against God's Word, you kids must choose; when the smart phone becomes a temptation to sin with pornography or endless useless gossip, choose between God and the devil. Many a day I've prayed that a parent would throw away their kid's phone and risk upsetting the child. If Jesus said, cut off your arm when it tempts you, you can surely throw away a phone. When public school propaganda and social media warriors and Hollywood tell us it's loving to accept any and every lifestyle, even when God says it's unhealthy and immoral, the path of love is to follow God. When a boyfriend or girlfriend think it's ok to shack up before marriage, be willing to hate them for the sake of loving Christ.

When you with your kids or you students in school or you workers on the job compromise your faith, you sell out your Savior. God's church has largely become

useless and ineffectual and lost influence in our world, because we Christians refuse to make hard choices. We look just like the world around us. The salt has lost its saltiness.

What's most important to you? Who's the "god" of your life? I know Sunday School seems early on a Sunday morning, but parents, your single God-given priority must be to see your children in heaven with you one day. That's job one. Students, when classmates group up in their cliques and gossip about others, do you speak up – or is belonging and following the devil more important than leading and following God? Does your use of money reflect a love for God and the desire to extend His Kingdom? Do you spend \$50 on a family meal out, but only give a few dollars to support God's Church?

Moses spoke words that he could well speak to us each day: *"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you today life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is your life..."*

The children of Israel didn't choose Jesus. They were the Chosen People, miraculously rescued through the water of the Red Sea. You didn't choose Jesus either. You didn't invite Him into your heart or surrender your life to Him. The Holy Spirit kicked down the doors of hell to rescue you, like a fireman pulling you from a burning car. God rescued you through the water of Holy Baptism. Titus 3 says, *"Not by righteous things we have done. He saved us by the washing of rebirth."* When our hearts were cold and dead in sin and the only thing we truly loved was ourselves, Colossians 1 says, *"God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*

By Baptism's water and Word, the Holy Spirit created faith and called you into God's family. God didn't wait for you to figure it out and put Him first. God put you first, before His own life. Jesus said, *"No one takes my life from Me, I lay it down of My own accord. I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly."*

That's God's Good News! Jesus took up the cross, died and rose from the dead, not because He found something in you worth saving, but because God's Fatherly heart loves you and wants you and all His children *"to be saved and to come to know the truth."* You were Jesus' number one priority – to forgive and love you.

Now, God could have taken you straight to heaven the moment you came to faith in Jesus – the moment He declared your sins forgiven. But here you are. God left you here to do His work until He comes to take you home on the Last Day. That means you who are saved by God's grace alone, face daily choices. Will you be the *"salt of the earth"* flavoring the world with the Gospel? Will you live out your calling - walking the walk and talking the talk, following Jesus even in the school hallways where the world needs your confession? Will you stand with Jesus when it might make your kids mad or make them unpopular at school? Are you prepared to *"take up your crosses –whatever that might be – and follow Jesus?"*

The second parable in our text is important... Some of you right now are confronting agonizing life and death moments in your life. Some of you have it pretty easy. If your life is blessedly peaceful be thankful. Use this time to train for war by being in God's Word... Don't wait till the war starts to figure out if you've got enough soldiers! Don't wait till the building project starts to figure out if you've got enough materials to finish the job! Count the cost! Like soldiers equip yourselves by living in God's Word.

Without a thought, Floyda Nunley was ready to run back into the flames, because God made her mighty through His Word. The time for you to learn God's Word and learn to pray is now. You and your kids need to be in Church and midweek and Sunday School now. You don't need terrible news from a doctor before you consider Christ. Right now, bury God's Word in your heart and have it on your lips, daily praying for God's strength. One day, the choice or challenge you face will literally be life or death... Don't wait for the battle to start. Paul wrote: "*Put on the full armor of God, so that you can stand against the devil's schemes.*"

Dear Disciple of Jesus, no matter how viciously the forces of hell rise up to assault you, "*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*" Jesus fought for you. He has risen, and "*No one can snatch you from His hand.*" Be faithful. Let no one snatch your crown. .God grant us such a faith today and always. Amen.

And now may the peace of God which surpasses human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.