

The Eagle

St. John Lutheran Church + Houghton Lake, Michigan 48629

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The View from Here

Hate Our Father And Mother?

Here's a question I personally was puzzled by as a kid in Jr. Confirmation class and beyond concerning this passage in the Bible: Jesus says in Luke 14:26, "***If anyone comes to me but does not hate his father, or his mother, his wife, his children, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.***" How can Jesus tell us to hate ... He's the Savior who came to love and to show us how to love others?

I know this has troubled a lot of Christians in this day and age, too, especially our seekers ... those who are investigating the Christian faith prior to any commitment. But the first thing we need to understand is that this is a Hebrew figure of speech that was often used to make a point. So our Lord is not saying "Hate your mother and father" literally, but He's trying to make a point. In fact Jesus is not saying "Hate father, and mother, etc." but speaks about it in reference to "being a disciple." So, it's not a general discussion about love and hate, it's a discussion about defining our ultimate loves. The love/hate statement has to do with what you give your ultimate preference, your ultimate allegiance. Jesus is even saying, *If you love anything more than Me or anything in the place of Me, you can have no part of Me or the salvation that I have for you by grace.* Salvation is a reconciled relationship with God through Jesus and it's really the key to loving those that God sends into our lives.

We know that Jesus teaches us elsewhere about love and how to love others. He even says, "***You should love God, and love your neighbor as yourself.***" At the cross, while being crucified to save the world, He was concerned about His mother and made sure that she was cared for. But, Jesus' point here is, *"if you want to love others, you have to have a relationship with God through Me,"* that's first, that's foremost in your life and that alone makes real love possible through your life to others, which is another way of saying, "***Seek first the Kingdom of God and then all these other things find their proper place.***"

When Jesus says "***seek first,***" He really is saying "Seek only the Kingdom of God." It seems strange, perhaps that Jesus used such shocking language ... He could have said it more simply, but it's important to put the phrase into its context. Jesus was speaking to the crowds and many of them in the crowds had their own opinion about what He stood for. Some thought He was a miracle worker, a rabbi, a political leader. Many had their own idea of how Jesus should help them. The people had a political, even false religious view, of Him and He's trying to make the point, *"I'm not here merely to help or give advice, I'm here to save you, to bring God's love and forgiveness to you as a gift."* And so to make that very, very, very clear, He uses this either/or, love/hate language.

We find that language shocking to our ears, but His first audience would have understood that as an idiomatic way of speaking and hopefully they got the point. That's why it's also important for us to hear it properly too. Jesus is the One and only Savior. He is our Lord, our Messiah, our King. There is nothing in this world that should or could take His place in our lives. If anything or anyone does, the Bible would call that idolatry, that's putting our faith and our love in the wrong place. Such misplaced allegiances actually inhibit and constrain our ability to really love people too. By putting our faith and trust solely in Christ, we're unleashing God's love in our lives and that enables us to better love those that He sends into our lives. Faith in Christ alone empowers a believer's true, lasting love to others. It's all about priority, about ultimate allegiances. It's about knowing where one's true resource for love really lies. When that is right, when our faith and love are focused on Christ, we gain all those other good things that God promises as well. We can take Christ's

shocking language not just as a warning, but also an invitation to receive and then share God's love in all its fullness.

That's the View from Here

Pastor Bill Winter