

Come, Settle Your Differences Show Wise Humility

† **cleansed of bitterness (vv.13-16)**

† **practicing peace (vv.13,17-18)**

In the name of Jesus, our humble Savior and Friend, dearly redeemed servants of our Lord:

As we worship the Lord on this opening Sunday of our WELS National Hymnal Week, we're celebrating the fact that God has made us His own children by faith. As the Holy Spirit inspired John to write: Jesus ***“came to what was his own, yet his own people did not accept him. But to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”*** (John 1:11f EHV¹) This sounds wonderful in church, but out there in the “real world” it means ridicule and abuse. Confessing Jesus' Name and trusting His words has always meant execution as if believers are children of the devil, blasphemers, and revolutionaries. Accused of stirring up trouble, keeping people from paying taxes – all these have been leveled at Christians. Satan's flaming arrows fire upon us day and night until it sometimes seems God has forgotten us and thrown us far out of sight. Our faith is so weak and cold. If it were steady and strong as we wish, we'd nearly die for joy. Give thanks that even little faith makes us children of God. ***“Don't be afraid, little flock”*** (Luke 12:32), Jesus assures. ***“Give us more faith!”*** (Luke 17:5), we cry with Jesus disciples. And with the father in last Sunday's sermon, ***“I do believe; help my unbelief!”*** (Mark 9:24 CSB) God humbles, then invites: ***Come, Settle Your Differences....***

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“Bitterness only rots the vessel in which it is stored.” That's what one mother taught her children when their father abandoned the family in violence and divorce. She gave them the gift of respect for their father by always speaking highly of him. “Love him for his good points; forgive him for his bad.” **Humility** under God's direction kept weeds of **bitterness** from rooting in concrete cracks and gave encouragement to ***“wait for the LORD. Be strong and take heart, and wait for the LORD!”*** (Psalm 27:14)

In our First Reading, Moses' siblings, Aaron and Miriam, thought they were at least as ***“wise and intelligent”*** as their brother. ***“Has the LORD really spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he also spoken through us?”*** (Numbers 12:2) This was not a time for humble Moses to stand up for his position. The LORD Himself came down to settle the family feud. His direct communication with Moses clearly showed His choice. His direct discipline left their sister Miriam with leprosy, while Aaron as God's appointed priest, pleaded for her. Moses too begged the LORD for her. Healing came a week later.

Envy and selfish ambition were surely driving the arguments of Jesus' disciples. Right after He spoke about His death and resurrection, they began to argue ***about who was the greatest***. They were too embarrassed to admit it. Jesus healed their hearts, **cleansed of bitterness** by a child's example and Jesus' invitation: ***“If anyone wants to be first, he will be the last of all and the servant of all.”*** (Mark 9:35)

Why does God give us so many bad examples in the Bible? The family of the greatest Old Testament prophet Moses! Jesus' own disciples! Then there were His brothers like James who came to take Him away, thinking, ***“He is out of his mind.”*** (Mark 3:21) They gave Jesus unsolicited advice: ***“You should...go to Judea...show yourself to the world.”*** ***For even his own brothers did not believe in him.*** (John 7:3–5) Can you see the Spirit's warning and encouragement here?

¹ EHV ~ Evangelical Heritage Version (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

We should not think our hearts and homes will be free of *disorder and every bad practice* if our *wisdom* only reaches the level of *worldly, unspiritual and demonic*. To *boast and lie, contrary to the truth* means also lying to ourselves. What's in our heart overflows our mouth. Years ago the wife of a guest preacher was bragging about how she could remember almost everything. Her husband listened a moment, then kindly commented, "Yes, but you really ought to forget 90% of it." To her credit she considered his words then humbly admitted, "You're right about that." Hearing their exchange, I was impressed at how *reasonable* they were with each other. Love and respect were winning as they accepted Christ's invitation to *Come, Settle Your Differences*. **Wise Humility cleansed them of bitterness....**

† practicing peace (vv.13,17-18)

By Word and sacrament the dear Holy Spirit keeps overflowing our hearts with *wisdom that comes from above*. You can see how *pure* it is by the fruit it keeps producing in couples, singles, and our congregation. When Christ is ruling in our heart and home, the husband's *love* is *peaceful* toward his wife in closeness, openness, understanding, peachmaking, loyalty, and esteem for her. The wife's *respect* is God-given, far beyond what this world can grasp. Controlled by Christ, she openly appreciates her husband's godly need to conquer challenges, his hierarchy to serve and protect like Christ, his authority under Christ, his insight, his desire for shoulder-to-shoulder relationship, his God-created need for sexuality.² The world will scoff at all this while God's people are **practicing peace** in **pure** wisdom.

Singles especially come to mind as *full of mercy and good fruits*. It was a single woman and her widowed mother who bought our first computer to manage hundreds of door-to-door contacts planting New Life congregation. Dorothy Lindig's estate built the classrooms which are filling up with Sunday School children and calling for more teachers. Patty Jo Weseloh used her retirement savings to establish our New Life Endowments, which now need a reorganized Planned Giving Committee to manage. Just before COVID hit, brother and sister Ruth and Ralph Odegard kept surprising us with gifts after they had gone to heaven. Jesus was single. Paul was single. And singleness of purpose bears fruit in *mercy*.

It is my constant prayer that the dear Holy Spirit will help us more and more to be **practicing peace** in wisdom's purity – *impartial and sincere*. Some of our newer members recall Ruth Odegard welcoming them when they first came as guests. Jesus has welcomed her to heaven; now other kind hearts are needed to welcome guests from all cultures and backgrounds. This is God's house. We worship Him who created us to be like Him and keeps recreating us to be holy in our emotions, intellect and will. It is God's will that everyone be saved. Surely we love to see old friends back in church. But we dearly need to look for others we haven't met yet and together with old friends welcome the new in Jesus' Name. What Christ has done for us all is overwhelming with joy **practicing peace**.

How can Jesus love us more as "my light, my strength, my song." Talk about "this cornerstone, this solid ground" that keeps you standing firm "through the fiercest drought and storm." You'll never reach high enough to exceed His "heights of love." You can't go deep enough to mine His "depths of peace." He stills your fears. He causes striving to cease. You can sing with a heart purified deep down inside where drugs and therapy cannot reach: "My comforter, my all in all; here in the love of Christ I stand." In His death, I live! Bought with His precious blood, "here in the power of Christ I'll stand."

No, I will not settle for the world's "peace," the "peace of the graveyard" that leaves grudges burning and bitterness growing. Neither should you settle. Jesus says, "*Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let it be afraid.*" (John 14:27) With God's pure wisdom, let us constantly *Come, Settle our Differences* as God rules our hearts in Christ to **Show Wise Humility**. **Cleansed of bitterness, practicing peace** let us sing day and night the praises of Him who calls us out of darkness into His marvelous light. *In Christ Alone* (CWS 752) we worship and thrive. Glory be to Jesus! Amen.

² Explore COUPLE and CHAIRS in Emerson Eggerichs' *Love and Respect* books at Amazon.com and other bookstores. For *The Preacher's Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.newlifeshoreview.com . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126