

# Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



## Weekly Sermon Series

### Kingdom: Conflict

The texts for this week focus on conflict. What are your thoughts about conflict in general? Conflict over religion? Do you regard such conflict as good? Necessary? Unavoidable? A waste? What experiences do you have with religious conflict in your family or community?

The Christian reformer Martin Luther said of Psalm 2: "I love this psalm with all my heart. It strikes and flashes valiantly among kings, princes, counselors, judges, etc. If I were as our Lord God, and had committed the government to my son, as he to his son, and the vile people (who oppose him) were as disobedient as now they be, I would knock the world to pieces." Well, the world was knocked to pieces because of Martin Luther and other reformers like John Calvin. Luther argued with the church and the authorities of his time over the abuses he saw around him.

What followed would be devastating. Because of the religious conflict (the Reformation) and the political conflict that followed, approximately one third of the population of the German states died of war, disease and distress during what is called the 30 Years War (1618–1648). Half of the men in German provinces perished. This was the last war over religion fought in Europe. Was it worth it? Was it necessary?

Conflict also fills Matthew 10. Jesus addresses the coming persecution. His mission is stirring up trouble, and he wants his disciples to anticipate this conflict, and be prepared for it.

Remember Matthew 2, and how the birth of Jesus is received with fear by Herod, who tries to kill Jesus, King of the Jews? Conflict starts immediately at Jesus' birth. Jesus comes to heal, cleanse and forgive sinners, bringing reconciliation and peace to the people. Yet, because of the resistance against him and his mission, Jesus foresees conflict and persecution. His message will bring a sword. The resistance against Jesus and his followers cannot be avoided. So many will die carrying the message of Jesus to the world. Is it worth it? Is it necessary?

Here are a few questions to think about: What is worth dying for? Is persecution still a problem? Can you think of any examples? In the United States, the founding fathers established freedom of religion in the First Amendment to the Constitution. This means that no religion is forbidden to gather and worship as they wish, and no religion is established by any government to be the official religion of that government. How has this arrangement affected the way religious conflict occurs in our country today? Is it worth it?

Dear God, help us in times of conflict. Help us to be faithful and show your love. Amen.

-- Week of October 10, 2010