

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family.² But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed.³ He remained hidden with his nurse at the temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.

¹² Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"

¹³ When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guards and the people, she went to the people at the temple of the LORD.¹⁴ She looked and there was the king, standing by the pillar, as the custom was. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her robes and called out, "Treason! Treason!"

¹⁵ Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops: "Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest had said, "She must not be put to death in the temple of the LORD."¹⁶ So they seized her as she reached the place where the horses enter the palace grounds, and there she was put to death.

¹⁷ Jehoiada then made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people.¹⁸ All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. (NIV84)

Theme: With Peace comes Division

We often associate peace with Christ. By the end of this service we will have mentioned the peace of God in our liturgy four times. Isaiah prophesied about Christ as he called him the **Prince of Peace**. On

Christmas the angels in the sky sung about him, **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests**. The peace that is associated with Christ is the peace of forgiveness that only he can give us through his suffering and death. Jesus came into this world to bring it peace.

But in our gospel for today Jesus says something different. **Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division**. How could Christ bring peace to the earth, but division at the same time? Whenever the gospel is preached believers and unbelievers will be in conflict with each other. Unbelievers, to some extent, will hate believers and believers will always hate what is evil. And as Jesus points out in our gospel, this happens even among families. Christ will split families in two—believers on one side, and unbelievers on the other. Our text for today is an extreme example.

By the time our text for today takes place the nation of Israel had been divided into two kingdoms—the kingdom of Israel to the north and the kingdom of Judah to the south.

Once God made a man named Jehu king over Israel. God wanted Jehu to purge the land of idolatry and wickedness by killing those who were leading the people in these sins. One of the people Jehu killed was the king of Judah, Ahaziah.

When Ahaziah's Mother, Athaliah, learned that her son was dead, she saw it as an opportunity to lead the kingdom of Judah herself—she could become queen. All she had to do was make sure all the other rightful heirs were out of the way. This wasn't too much of a problem because her husband had killed off all of his brothers when he became king. And many of her other relatives were killed when her son was murdered. So it seems the only people who had a claim to the throne were her grandchildren. They were all that stood between her and complete power.

But her greed and lust for power led her to kill her own grandkids. She saw her window of opportunity to become the ruler and she took it. Athaliah went throughout the land killing her own grandchildren. She didn't care that some of her grandkids were still babies. She didn't care about God's commands—about right or wrong. She only cared about herself and gaining power. So she chose to disobey God and kill her own flesh and blood. Talk about a division among family

members! Her family was forced to make a choice—do they go along with her, or do they obey God and risk their lives?

I think it's safe to say that you won't have any family members trying to kill you simply so that they could become a ruler of a country. But that doesn't mean family members won't choose sin and evil over God's Word at your expense.

Perhaps you have a spouse who doesn't care much about God's Word. Not that he's an unbeliever, but he certainly doesn't encourage you to go to worship or Bible Class, he doesn't quite understand why you want to give so much to Christ. Perhaps every once in a while he tries to get you skip worship to go on a trip, a game, or simply to sleep in. Or perhaps your spouse isn't a believer. In fact she hates God and wants nothing to do with him—nor does she want you to want anything to do with him. She complains about how much time you spend at Church—whether it's worship, Bible Class, or volunteering. She tries to stop you from giving any offerings to the Lord at all. Maybe it's a grandparent or cousin. They mock and ridicule you because of your faith. They wonder how you can believe in something so foolish. “How can you believe that someone is both God and man? Or that someone walked on water, changed water into wine, or rose from the dead? How can you deny the scientific proof of evolution?” So they try to persuade you to deny God's and his Word—they try to mock some sense into you.

It happens between spouses, between parents and their children, between brothers and sisters. The gospel causes division among families. The gospel brings the peace of forgiveness to those who believe—but unbelievers set themselves up against those who believe in the peace of Christ.

So what do you do? Sadly, at times, you may cave under the pressure. You make excuses. You tell yourself that it is best to keep the family in tact. You just don't want any discord between family members. If they have some sort of issue with the gospel, then you'll just cave in here or there. You're not worried though, you know better—you'll be alright. You're not going to give up too much—just a little, enough to keep peace.

Perhaps it starts out with sleeping in along with your spouse on a Sunday morning—or going on a weekend trip. It may continue with questioning a hard-to-understand teaching. Or it's acting as if some

command doesn't exist. Perhaps you want to study God's Word by attending Bible Class but you're worried what your family would think of you, so you don't. Or you stopped reading your Bible at home in favor of watching your favorite tv show as a family. Someone in your family doesn't care about God and hates your faith. So you compromise by spending more time with them and less time worshiping God and studying his Word. Or maybe you cave under the pressure and give less for your offerings—if at all. As it turns out this works well for you—you have more free time, and more money to spend on you and your family. It seems as if everyone is a little happier.

Unbelievers will always be divided from believers when it comes to the gospel. This happens even among family. But you don't want to be divided as a family so at times you may choose them instead of God. Offerings, worship attendance, and the study of God's Word suffer—and thus also so does your faith.

But that's not what Jehosheba and Jehoiada did. They stood up for God and his Word and they did what is right—despite the fact that they were risking their lives. Jehosheba was the daughter of Athaliah's husband—it seems, however, that she wasn't the daughter of Athaliah. Jehosheba saw that Athaliah was trying to kill all her grandkids so she took her nephew Joash and hid him from Athaliah. For six years Joash remained hidden in the temple of God.

Then one day Jehoiada, the high priest and husband of Jehosheba got together a large group of guards. He showed them Joash, the rightful heir to the throne and asked them to back him up. Then they anointed Joash, crowned him king, and started shouting. Such a loud noise was raised that Athaliah went to the temple to investigate. She tore her robes and shouted, **Treason! Treason.**

But Jehoiada gave the command and the guards took her out of the temple and killed her. They also killed anyone who tried to back Athaliah up. Then they went after the idolaters. They killed the priest of Baal and smashed all the altars to the false god.

This wasn't a safe thing for Jehosheba and Jehoiada. They were conspiring against their own relative, who was ruler over the kingdom. Athaliah wasn't afraid of putting anyone to death—especially her own family members. But they cared more about God and doing what is

right than their own family. They put their lives on the line for the sake of God and his will.

Athaliah, her followers, and the idolaters got what they deserved. In one way or another all the wicked people were taken care of. The same still stands today. God deals with all unbelievers accordingly. Those who do not believe in him will not be saved, but will suffer for their sins forever.

Believers on the other hand will be vindicated. We may have to suffer for awhile on this earth. We may face family strife. They may mock and ridicule us because of our faith. Our own loved ones may even try to persuade us to worship a little less and to have some sinful fun a little more. Our family may be divided because of Christ, but in the end God will take care of everything. In the end, we'll have a perfect life with our Savior forever. As he did with Joash, he will take care of us. He will watch over us and protect us. And soon he will take us home to be with him forever. And there in heaven we will have no more strife or family problems. For we'll be living with our family of believers. Standing side-by-side together, worshiping our one and only Savior.

In our text for today we see God's love and protection. But we also see his wisdom. If Athaliah would have been successful in killing her whole family—including her grandson Joash, then she would have wiped out the line of David. She would have successfully destroyed the line of David's kingship. And God promised David, **Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.** God promised David that one of his descendants would always sit on the throne. So God kept his promise by keeping Joash safe from Athaliah.

But God promised David that one of his descendants would be the Messiah—the Savior of the world. And he would have an eternal kingdom. If Athaliah would have successfully killed Joash, then God's promise to David about the Messiah wouldn't have come true. And as you know, Jesus was the fulfillment of this promise—the descendent of David with an eternal kingdom.

So God watched over his promise. He kept Joash safe and blessed him and his family. And around 800 years later he sent his son, Jesus to live in this sin-filled world. He sent his one and only son to die. To suffer the world's guilt for their horrible sins, to be rejected by the

Father to suffer through the pain and agony of hell. He sent his son to be the substitute for his enemies so that we may not die but live with him forever. But God also sent his son to be the firstfruits of the dead—assuring us that we too will rise from the dead. Then Jesus ascended into heaven where he sits on the throne of God as king over his entire creation. Soon this king will return to take all believers to live with him in heaven forever.

The gospel that brings the peace of Christ results in conflict and division between believers and unbelievers—even among families. Our natural reaction is to compromise. But no matter what people may think of us, no matter what family issues it may cause—we stand up for what is right. We remain strong in God and his Word. And we willingly face any negative reactions that may arise.

And there is no need to worry. For God watched over Joash so through his line he could send the Savior of the world. Christ will come again to take you home where you will be free from division—where you will live with your spiritual family forever. So when you face difficulties in our family lives because of the peace of Christ—when your family is divided, don't fear, but look toward the peace you will enjoy forever. Amen.