

Pentecost 10 8/18/19
 Luke 12:49-53 15C

DO YOU THINK THAT I HAVE COME TO GIVE PEACE ON EARTH? NO, I TELL YOU, BUT RATHER DIVISION.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, PRINCE OF PEACE (Is 9:6).

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He is the Prince of Peace because He has brought peace between God and man. And because He has brought peace between God and man, He is able to say,

- ⇒ "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you (Jn 14:27)."
- ⇒ "I have said these things to you, that in Me you have peace (Jn 16:33)."

Yet, this same Prince of Peace says, "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division (v. 51)." So, we ask that Lutheran question: What does this mean?

To help us understand these words of Jesus, let us use the illustration of the cross.

The vertical beam teaches us of our relationship to God in Christ Jesus. Jesus is the "Prince of Peace" because He established peace between God and mankind.

Because of our sin, we were God's enemies. And as you confess, that means you deserve only His temporal and eternal punishment.

So, Jesus came, born of Virgin Mother, to be our Savior. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished," He said (v. 50). The "baptism" He has to be baptized with is the suffering and death for the sins of the world. Jesus is the "Lamb of God, who has taken away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29)." God placed on

His own Son the sin of all the world, the sin of every sinner.

The peace between God and humanity is made possible because God's wrath against us was not poured out on us, but on His only-begotten Son. The Prophet Isaiah says it this way, "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us PEACE, and with His stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5).

Let me make one thing clear: This "peace" that Jesus gives us, brings to us, is not earthly, worldly place, some type of utopian age on this earth where people are suddenly going to start being nice to one another. Nor, is this peace Jesus gives some kind of "easy feeling." It is not an emotion. It is objective fact.

You know my illustration to help us understand this, right: On the 11th Hour of the 11th Day of the 11th Month in the year 1918, the guns fell silent on the Western Front. World War I ended. There was peace. The war, the strife, was over. It was not an emotion. It was objective fact.

So, it is with the peace Christ gives to us. The warfare, the strife, the enmity, between God and mankind is over, because the blood of Christ has atoned for all of our sin. Truly, Jesus is the "Prince of Peace."

At our baptism, we are marked by the cross upon our forehead and our heart to mark us as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. The cross brings peace with God and absolves those who are marked with the cross in Baptism. But, let us never forget that the cross also brings enmity from the world.

Which brings us to the horizontal beam of the cross. The horizontal beam teaches us of our life in this world, our relationship with our neighbor. In Christ, we are Christ to the world. But, we must ever be aware, that this

world will treat us just as it treated Christ.

Our Baptism into Christ makes us one with Christ. His death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection. His ascension is our ascension. His eternal life is our eternal life. And, His hatred and rejection by this fallen world becomes our own hatred and rejection.

In the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus prayed this,

"I do not ask for these only (ie, the 12 Apostles), but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father are in Me, and I in you, that they also may be in us (vv. 20-21).

Yet, we are not one. And, it is not God who divides and separates. It is the lies of the devil and false doctrine that cause division and separation; and division is always manmade. There is division because people do not believe the truth of the Gospel, but, St. Peter writes, "having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions" (2 Tm 4). We are compelled to speak the truth of the Gospel, to teach men "to observe all that [Christ has] commanded us" (Mt 28). In man's sinful, selfish pride and ego, those who believe and follow the lies of the devil, don't like to be told that they are wrong. So, there will be division, division between neighbors, division between churches, and even divisions within families; all over Christ and the Gospel. As we live upon this earth, on this side of heaven, the Gospel will not bring outward tranquility and peace upon His followers, but enmity, hatred, opposition, and persecution -- even physical persecution.

Which is why we need to hear and heed the words of our Epistle reading, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (He 12:1). It is not merely coincidence that the writer of the Hebrews compares

running a race to walking by faith in the Christian life. Running is hard; it takes discipline; it can be downright painful.

Look at it this way: If I said you, “For Church this morning, we are going to run a lap around the parking lot;” you would say what to your pastor? EDIT: living translation: the new minister will be here Thursday. The writer of the Hebrews uses that word to impress upon us that living a Christian life, walking by faith in the midst of things we cannot understand with our human reason, is not easy.

It is agony to run the race of faith. In our Gospel lesson, our Lord tells us exactly how bad it can be in our earthly race of faith. As people hated Christ and sought to destroy Him, so it will hate those who confess His holy name. Remember well the words of Jesus, “Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” When we preach Christ Jesus and all that He has taught us -- that children are sinful and need baptism, that Christ comes to us in bread and wine, that woman cannot be pastors, that all sex – including homosexuality -- outside of marriage is sin, that euthanasia and all abortion is murder -- we will be called mean-spirited, un-loving. The battle still goes on against Christ and we are simply in the middle of it.

Which is why we must ever remember that our race of faith ends in heaven. The Bible promises us this, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them” (Re 14:13). In heaven we will rest from all the curse and division of sin.

For today, we do as the writer of Hebrews teaches us to do, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (He 12:2).” We fix our eyes on Jesus, because He is the object of our faith and the giver of that faith.

He gives us faith in our baptism, so that we trust, rejoice, and find hope in Him alone. As we run the race of faith, Jesus continues to come to us through His Word and His very Body and Blood to forgive, strengthen and encourage us.

What is the meaning of the 1st Commandment? We fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Let us not fear men, what they think of us or what they may do to us, rather let us cherish the promise of Jesus,

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Mt 5:12).