

Pentecost 9 8/14/22
Luke 12:49-53 15C

SERMON TEXT BEFORE US THIS MORNING IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON, FROM THE 12TH CHAPTER OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

Can't we all get along? Jesus answers that question:

Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

Wow! Jesus Himself saying that we are **not** going to get along. In light of Jesus' words, let me make one thing clear: Division is always man-made. God does not want it. There is only division because sinful humanity rejects God and God's Word and God's will. All that we need to do is look at Creation. We were in perfect harmony with our Creator, with one another, and with creation itself. What changed all of that was sin.

Sin made us enemies of God and enemies of one another. Consider the world apart from Jesus: Cain kills Abel. "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," so God decides to blot out mankind from the face of the land, sparing only righteous Noah and his family (Ge 6). Mankind is so impressed with how smart they are that they decide to build a tower to the heavens, so God confused their language and dispersed them over the face of all the earth. Jesus, the Savior, "came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him (Jn 1)."

Martin Luther knew all too well the division the Gospel brings. The pope was teaching that if you wanted the forgiveness of sins, you had to buy it; pay cash money for it. Martin Luther read the Bible and, preached

and proclaimed as the Bible taught, that forgiveness is full and free in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. So, in April, 1517, he was called to Worms, Germany.

His enemies called upon him to recant, but responded with one sentence:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures or evident reason, for I believe neither in the pope nor councils alone, since it has been established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves, I am bound by the Scriptures adduced by me, and my conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience. God help me. Amen.”

And Luther is declared a heretic and a sentence of death is put on his head.

Can't we all get along? No, we can't. Like Luther, My Friends in Christ, our conscience is bound by the Word of God, which means that we will not allow this perverse world to squeeze us into its mold. And the world will not like us for that, anymore than they liked Jesus. For the Gospel is “folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Co 1:18).

This is why we dare not lose sight of the Good News of the Gospel. Sin divides. It divides us from God and from one another, so Jesus came, born of virgin mother, to reconcile us and bring peace between us and God, and between us to one another by His perfect life, suffering, and death upon the cross

And, the Good News is that Jesus does not limit His atoning grace. He doesn't look at one person and say, “I love you. I will die and rise for you.” And then look at another and say, “I don't care for you. My death will not be sufficient for your sins.” No, no, no. Hear the clear word of

Scripture, “For God so loved the world.” And again, the Bible says, “He died for all (2 Cor 5).” St. Paul teaches us, “God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ (2 Cor 5)” and “[God] desires all people to be saved (1 Tim).”

Apart from Christ, all – including you and me -- would be lost. But because of Jesus, we are separated from sin and its wages of death. But whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Jesus is teaching us that there will be division when it comes to the Gospel. And yet, where there is division, what does sinful humanity with their fallen reason do? They blame God, and insist they are smarter than the Creator and their will must be done.

Allow me to illustrate this with the example of a lifeboat. Say you’re on the Titanic or the USS Minnow, and your ship goes down. So, there you are – treading water, wave after wave filling your mouth and nose, you’re cold, you’re getting more tired by the minute, and you are hoping against hope that you don’t sink into the foamy deep.

And, along comes a lifeboat. They throw you a buoy to pull you abroad and you will be saved. But, you say, “No! It’s not fair that there is only one lifeboat.” Or even more foolishly say, “All lifeboats are the same.” Or, you just deny, deny that you are trying to stay afloat to keep from sinking to the foamy deep. Now, I ask you: Is the lifeboat the reason you are not saved?

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me,” Jesus says (Jn 14:6). There is only one ark to be saved from the death of sin – Jesus Christ.

“Jesus is Lord” is a confession that divides those who believe it and those who don’t, and the world is always pressuring the Church to change.

The Church, My Dear Friends in Christ, is a reflection of heaven. The church is not, and dare not be, a reflection of this fallen, perverse world. And to that I would add – a reflection of this perverse world that sinful human reason demands it to be.

That's why, that's why, this division the Gospel brings is, honestly, so troubling, even hurtful, that our enemies will be those of our own household,

“For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

This is the division, the heartache, the tears, that results when you leave the house on Sunday morning and your loved one stays asleep in bed; when your child rejects the faith into which they were baptized and confirmed; when your loved one joins another denomination or even a completely different religion and they insist – demand – that you accept their beliefs as truth, even though what they believe flatly breaks the 2nd Commandment.

Perhaps, nowhere is this seen more than the practice of closed communion. We believe that when we commune at a Church's altar, you are telling God and the world that you believe what that Church believes, because this is sincerely what we believe the Bible teaches. By not communing together, we are giving public witness that we really do not believe the same Gospel. But of course, not everyone understands or agrees with our Communion practice, so there is division. And they are angry at you, even belittle, and demand that we change, to do as they wish.

Our Epistle reading this morning reminds us that being a Christian in a hostile world is not always easy.

But, nothing happens by chance in God's creation, Dear Child of God. This is a difficult cross to bear, but Jesus is with you. He has allowed this division into your life, that you may be His instrument in your own home, that you, with love and patience, may speak His saving Word. It will be difficult, but God will grant you grace to be His blessed instrument.

Jesus prays that God would sanctify us in the truth (Jn 17:17). "Sanctify" means to "set apart," to divide from that which is unholy. By His grace, Jesus has set you apart from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from grave to heaven, from "enslaved to the devil" to "child of God"; just as He has done for Willow and Vivianne this morning.

So, don't worry about what people think of you; don't fear that they may reject you or belittle you. It doesn't matter what the world thinks of you. You are God's own child; and with you, He is well-pleased.