

Pentecost 10 8/17/25
Luke 12:49-53 15C

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

“I’ll just be glad when Christmas is over.” Those were the words of a lady to a fellow pastor, as he recounted the conversation. Of all places, they were sitting next to each other before a Christmas choir concert, making casual conversation before the concert began.

To be kind and sympathetic, he responded, “I understand. It’s kind of crazy with all of the shopping and special events. It’s hard to catch your breath.” “No, that’s not what I mean,” she replied. “I’ll be glad when Christmas is over because... I can’t stand Christmas. I never get it right.”

He listened as she explained. She had a daughter, married, living far away in another state, who did not attend church at all. In fact, she had openly rejected the gifts God had given her in her baptism and the faith she confessed in her confirmation vows. She saw the church as being the “problem” in the world today. She would come home for Christmas and that put her mom in an awkward position. If she planned Christmas dinner around going to church, there would be an argument with her daughter. Her even attending Christmas worship caused only anger and resentment. It was uncomfortable and she hated the fighting. It had reached the point that she felt horrible about even wanting to go to church. Christmas was hard for her. No matter what she did, there would be conflict.

As I read the words of Jesus for today, I thought of my colleague’s telling of his conversation with this woman. Jesus addresses this woman’s situation. And maybe, you find yourself in a situation much like this

woman. We hear Jesus words today, *“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division”*.

These words of Jesus are troubling; they are difficult for our ears to hear. They are not what we would expect. Yet, these words prepare us for life in Christ’s Kingdom because they teach us an important truth: Jesus brings division.

When Jesus asks, *“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth”* (v. 51)? Our answer is “Yes. Yes, Jesus, we do.” Of course, we think He has come to bring peace on earth. And why would we not?

Look at the words of Luke’s Gospel. When the angels greeted the shepherds at Christ’s birth, what did they sing? *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth **peace** among those with whom He is pleased”* (2:14). When Simeon held Jesus in his arms, what did he confidently proclaim? *“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in **peace**”* (2:29). To the sinful woman who anointed Him (7:50) and to the hemorrhaging woman who touched Him Jesus says, *“Your faith has made you well; go in **peace**”* (8:48). When Jesus sends His disciples out in mission, He instructs them, *“Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘**Peace** be to this house’”* (10:5).

Yet, we have a problem. *“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather **division**”*. How do we understand that?

To help us understand these words of Jesus, let’s take a look at the CROSS. The cross has TWO parts.

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. He was angry at us and

we were under His wrath and condemnation.

So, Jesus came to be our Savior. 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. Jesus carried those sins to the cross, where all of the Father’s wrath and anger against our sin was poured out, not on us, but on His own Son.

The peace between God and humanity is made possible because God’s wrath against us has been placed on Jesus. 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 some earthly, worldly peace, 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.

Think of it this way: 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.

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. Because a disciple is not above their master (Mt 10:24), the hatred and rejection the world had for Jesus becomes our own hatred and rejection.

Jesus Himself said it this way,

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. This is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No master is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also... They will treat you this way because of My name” (Jn 15).

I cannot emphasize enough that it is not God who divides and separates. Sin divides. The Gospel exposes all the lies of the devil. That is why there is division. In the times in which we live, people do not endure 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 4:3)*. We are compelled to speak the truth of the Gospel, to teach men “to observe all – not some things; not only what they want to hear but all -- *that [Christ has] commanded us” (Mt 28:20)*. In man’s sinful, selfish pride and ego, those who are wrong, 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 with families. And sometimes, that division expresses itself not only in angry words, but, as our Epistle reading reminds us, physical persecution and even death.

The lady at the Christmas choir concert was right. Christmas is difficult, and so is every day in the life of a Christian in the Kingdom of Jesus. Living in Jesus and Jesus in us, we trust in and share a peace which divides. This will not change until the return of Jesus.

But, the Good News of the Gospel is that God who has created faith in your heart, will strengthen and keep you in that faith, just as He sustained all those heroes of the faith we heard of in our Epistle. As we today carry the cross of division, that same joy of heaven awaits us. So for today, we fight the good fight of the faith, knowing that the cross and struggle of today will be forever forgotten in the joy of heaven.