

10th Sunday after Pentecost- Proper 15
Luke 12: 49-56
August 18, 2022
Christ Episcopal Church
Towanda, Pa.
Rev. Betsy W. Sentigar

“Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth?” Jesus asks and then answers, “No, I tell you, but rather division!”

The cost of following Jesus comes into focus as Jesus, the Prince of Peace, says, “From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father... mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” [Yikes!!!]

Jesus experienced this separation himself as his own family was torn by his ministry. Though Jesus’ mother Mary would be with him at the cross, the Gospels tell us that there was a time when his family wanted to bring him home as they wondered if Jesus hadn’t gone crazy. And he is well aware

that this is just the beginning of the ways that the path he offers will divide many, even as a new community comes into being.¹

The passionate response of Jesus seems angry and divisive. It is his passionate mission to recreate society based on principles of a new law. This law turns upside down the power structures of the day. His parables and lessons confuse and disrupt the status flow- the order of things known in his day. **The urgency of the God's people of his day [as they yell out "Crucify him"] was to turn back God's own mission itself! ²**

Jesus passion is so strong; this directive coming from God-demonstrates his ability in obedience to give himself away completely through crucifixion on the cross. God's in breaking into the world has been laid out since the beginning. Jesus experiences and lives out this intense desire to change the world as a living and loving sacrifice even at the cost of "family"- the primal structure order of society.

¹ Sermons that Work the Rt. Rev. Frank Logue,,The Cost of True Peace, Pentecost 10 (C) – August 14, 2022

²Sermon Brainwave for Pentecost 10C August 2022

He's eager to see it happen but there is no resolution without a change in power with purification. He's knows the difficulty. It's a whole new world with a new way of relating.

Like then, division is the language of our current time. What is the urgency? **The presence of God's in breaking** . Jesus' sacrifice took place inside of that cultural urgency and manifested to all...God's presence in His being. This urgency has continued throughout the millennia and is very present with us today. How do we deny God through Jesus?

In Jeremiah this morning: Jeremiah calls us forward in urgency in direction of the Gospel - we do not know how to interpret the present time. Division is the language of the current time. What is the urgency? It is recognising the presence of God in all things!

With division and polarities, collectively, our best and brightest have a hard time with interpretation. There is a new question before us, not whose right and wrong, but how do we come together with our self prescribed certainties and avoid self righteousness. No preacher will set forward a policy of legislation, but the church needs to be the

church. There needs to be repentance and reconciliation. Who do we claim as family? Who do you claim as family?

[Insert Lambeth Conference resolutions]

In July, I participated in a one week retreat entitled “Boundless Compassion”. Twelve fellow Christians accompanied me at the Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua, New York. This included four close partners with whom I practice Centering Prayer each week and with whom I share in the family of Christ. Upon the completion of the program we are now trained facilitators in order to offer the principles and practices of its content.

The mission statement claims compassion as an essential component of society seeking peace and harmony. It goes on to say that compassion needs nurturing and development for further expression. Its principles seek (as Jesus did) to create a community of people bringing compassion into personal life, community and the world. As the center of our lived experiences we approach one another with true respect, we grow in an ability to lessen suffering, and we carry an intention to encourage others to

live compassionately. ³ This, I believe is the emerging family Jesus is talking about.

Where then does this scripture connect with “Boundless Compassion”?

Love one another “as I have love you” is a start. We marginalize others as a natural response in our reptilian brains. Did you know that an “Us vs. Them” behavior assaults our brains 4 times a second asking our bodies if we are encountering a threat. This is a part of our human biology..fight or flight response to stimuli. Culturally though,in our day to day, this is dehumanizing to a large extent and demands effort and intention on our part to pattern ourselves into a compassionate stance.

Instead of : “You’re different from me ..go away!” Consider, “Your different from me...come and teach me what I need to know!” How do we do this in an age of globalization, where confusion runs rampant in many countries and power structures? It’s hard enough to maneuver through our days with our own challenges. Yet, Jesus focuses on his perspective of each human brother and sister. . Jesus experienced no division with anyone, even those who betrayed him on the cross. He prayed for them.

³ Mission Statement Boundless Facilitator Handbook Issued My 2022
www.boundlesscomapssion.org

Elizabeth Johnson writes : “ *There will not be justice until each person is satisfied being anyone in the world, in any situation, anywhere.*”

I commend you to meditate on this startling quote of hers. In practice, one may take on the example of a person on the margins such as:

- A middle aged man addicted to opioids
- A ten year old boy soldier with a rebel group
- A thirteen year old girl pregnant from an uncle who raped her
- A blind woman begging on the street
- A family living among the rubble of a bombed village

These are those whom Jesus considers family. They are the marginalized.

Do we?

Jesus’ last question in today’s gospel passage is “You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” With our Christian identity as our primary lens, let us in all things carry within ourselves the “Mind of Christ” . Let us apply this perspective in our days - in our hearts, minds, and souls.

I will close with a prayer for unity:

Holy One, your love unites all of us who live on this planet. We are truly brothers and sister, joined in spirit through your abiding presence. Gather in your heart all the people who live in situations of marginalization. Enfold all those on the edge of society in your heart of compassion. Guide us to find and enter into actions that will help relieve the burdens of those who are oppressed. Thank you for the immensity of your love. Amen ⁴

⁴ Joyce Rupp *Prayers of Boundless Compassion - 2018 We are One* pg. 53