

Jesus is Clear...But...What Does It Mean?

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time – August 14, 2016- Luke 12:49-53

If ever there was a time that I'm a bit confused about a scripture reading, this week's gospel fits the bill. Jesus says specifically this week, **"Do you think that I have come to establish peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."** So the Prince of Peace is proclaiming division? That doesn't make sense. What does it mean?

Over the course of the weeks of Ordinary Time, the gospel writer, St. Luke, has been trying to establish for us a portrait of Jesus Christ. In this gospel, we see Jesus as an advocate for the poor. Jesus breaks down the barriers between men and women, as well as, between Jew and Gentile. Jesus challenges the religious leaders of that time about the customs and traditions that have kept people apart from God and calls the people of the earth to embrace God's Kingdom of love and mercy. Jesus has experienced both rejection and acceptance of his radical vision, so much so, that he has predicted his own death.

This week, Jesus says, **"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!"** Jesus has referenced the fact that his message is so important, and yet so difficult to hear and accept, that the leaders will soon put him to death. And yet, his message is so important that his hope is that he will set the earth on fire with his love.

Scripture scholars say that this particular gospel reading looks to what is going on in Jesus' life. It also looks toward the Second Coming when Jesus will return to judge those who have followed him on his mission and those who have rejected him.

Jesus says that when that time comes, it will be a time of divided households and broken relationships because the choice is clear. Jesus is the one to follow and not all will be able to accept that choice. **"From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."**

We currently live in a time of great conflict and division. But is this something new? Or is our conflict between one another as old as time itself? Jesus is reminding us this week that it is the human condition and frailty that allows for division and conflict. He has come to call us to Divine greatness because we, as humans, have a great capacity for good. However, we also have a great capacity for evil. This is what Jesus is reminding us today. The lack of peace that we experience in our lives flows from our choices. The one choice presented today to us by Christ is to follow him into his mission of love, mercy and forgiveness.

Blessings!


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