

Sermon for August 14th

Luke 12:49-56

Would you please pray with me? May the words from my mouth and the meditations of each our hearts be pleasing in your sight, Ever Loving Spirit, Amen.

Okay, so that Gospel does not feel great. What are some emotions that arise for you in this? Confusion? Curiosity? It is one of those texts that begs the question, is this is Good News? Is this Gospel? It feels like one of those scary Gospel readings that make you question who Jesus is and what he was about. He says he is here to create, division? So, let's break this down.

Here is a quick reminder. Jesus was a real living man. Who probably stubbed his toe. Had a favorite meal. Jesus had a mother and a father and siblings. He had his family traditions and work and things he like to do for fun. Jesus had Jewish holiday traditions such as Passover. He probably had a favorite food. Jesus also had a sense when things were changing. Sometimes, we need to be reminded of one another's humanity and that having emotions and passions are human.

Theologian NT Wright once wrote, "If you want to know who God is, look at Jesus. If you want to know what it means to be human, look at Jesus. If you want to know what grief is, look at Jesus." It seems we get so overwhelmed by the death of Jesus and what happened on that cross that we neglect and overlook Jesus' life. Him as a human. How he existed and lived. There are times where Jesus is angry. Times where Jesus is joyful. Times where Jesus is confused. Times where Jesus is sad and full of grief. Jesus is divine. And Jesus is also human.

In the beginning of our Gospel this morning, Jesus says, "I came to bring fire to the earth." That sounds scary. But it reminds us of what John the Baptizer said toward the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. In the beginning of Luke, we are introduced to a man named John who lives in the wilderness eating bugs. And he is baptizing people. People are thinking he is the Messiah, the one that the Jewish people believe will come to fix all of the problems in the world. And John says "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." So before you get too scared about this text. This is Jesus acknowledging the voice crying out in the wilderness. Jesus is lifting up that he is the one that John talked about. He is the Messiah. Jesus is the one to bring fire and Spirit to the world. And he is upset with how the world is. Jesus acknowledges that he is under great pressure to bring the fire. And what Jesus has to say, has and will continue to cause division. Possibly not what immediately comes to mind. Jesus feels a great sense of responsibility, "How I wish it were already rekindled." He said. Jesus has a sense that some of the things he is saying will upset a lot of people. He is saying a lot of illegal things in his talks. So Jesus may upset the rule-follower. Or the traditionalist.

This is a Jesus who is angry. Anger is always cast aside as a bad thing, "You are not allowed to be angry." Who has ever held in their anger? Who believes they do not know how to explain or

express their anger? Jesus is mad. When he gets angry he wants change. Isn't that what anyone wants when they become upset? They do not want to be in a particular situation or things are not going how they want? Or they are misunderstood? He has come to bring up division because the words he is saying goes against tradition. It goes against the law. It goes against power. To love and dare to exist creates division against people who dare to exist and those who have a sense that someone isn't worthy of love, forgiveness, grace. So Jesus may upset the rule-follower. Or the traditionalist. It is a time for people to look inward to see if they can embrace the newness of a world changing or if comfortability is more important.

We like to imagine a Jesus full of love and hope and peace and grace. That is one of the beauties I love about Jesus. He shows us the true complexity of what it means to be human. We are full of grace, love, hope. And yet we are also filled with passion, desire, anger, disappointment, grief, suffering, and on and on and on. Jesus has an intense desire to see the world change. Jesus reminds me that to have emotions and to express our concerns is not only human but holy. To live as our authentic selves, it is holy. Jesus' words sound scary. And division is a word we hear in our world today. (Add more)

I resonate with this Jesus. I resonate with a Jesus so passionate about the way the world is and all the ways it can change to help our fellow humans. A Jesus who is not afraid to call people out on the hard things. I resonate with the Jesus flipping tables because of manipulation and greed and how money is used to belittle and shame and oppress. I resonate with this Jesus who tells officials and leaders to essentially, "get your act together."

I believe this is good news. I believe the division Jesus is recognizing can be holy. What a world we would have. If there was unity. I am glad Jesus understands that not everything is hunky dory. I am so glad we have Jesus to remind us that this world is hard. And he knows this too.

Yes, we have a Savior who saves and loves and cares. Jesus cares deeply. How great is that? That we have a Savior who cares deeply for the state of the world and being angry about the injustices occurring. We have a Jesus who is in relation with us and that loves and cares even when we do not see it. I am grateful we have a Redeemer and a Creator who looks at the hard things. Not only looks but dares to question and dream. Jesus is praying and working within such a challenging world. That is what got him into trouble. Jesus calls us to do the hard things. Jesus calls us to care and to love. Jesus calls us to, do justice. A hopeful sustainable justice that leads to more. More inclusion. More questions. Jesus has come to bring division. Because his words and stance on the world is some challenging stuff to hear that makes people uncomfortable. How do we do the hard things in a culture that goes against our call to care and love? By being out authentic, true selves. By expressing our holy and human emotions that our society deems unnecessary. We dare to be the beloved Children that God has called us to be. We are a people called to do the hard things. The hardest of which is love.

Let it be so. Amen.