

Pentecost 10C
Luke 12:49-56
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August 18, 2019

Rain, heat,
Water, fire.

These are the images Jesus talks about today,
As he announces that he brings not peace, but division to
the earth.

Fire divides--
You're on one side or the other,
You don't willingly go through.

Water divides--
While we can willingly and enjoyably go through water,
It is a dividing force,
A dividing line between counties and
continents,
Between lands and people.

We are walking wet in our baptism every day,
But even that baptismal water acts as a divider.
Our baptism unites us with Christ,
Which divides us from sin and death.

Fire and water divide,
Which is what Jesus says next about himself:
"You think that I came to bring peace to the earth?
No, but rather division!"

Jesus comes to divide.

Which is always a little hard for us to embrace and understand, I think,

Because Jesus is our peace.

God is a God of peace,

A God who brings us together in great love
and mercy.

The peace that passes all understanding--

Only Christ brings that to us.

So what is this about division?

I've recently finished an excellent and incredibly eye-opening book by Pastor Lenny Duncan, an ELCA pastor in Philadelphia.

His book is entitled *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US*,

(I commend it to you all, and maybe we can even do a book study on it together).

It's convicting,

It calls us all out on our internal,

Subconscious,

Racism, specifically in the Lutheran church,

that comes out in ways that we have been so
blind to.

And while I wanted to keep reading it quickly because it was hard to put down,

I intentionally took each chapter as a sort of devotion each morning,

Stopping to chew on Pastor Duncan's words and pray and ponder what they meant for me and for the Church.

In his book, Pastor Duncan writes about the division that Jesus brings:

“Jesus provides the vision for division.” He says.

“If we are dividing what is life-giving from what is empire,

what is of God from what isn't,

what is love from what is hate,

then we are walking the path of our Savior.”

Jesus comes to divide.

Divide us from those things that we should separate from.

Divide us from the things that divide us.

Empire and power and stepping on others to achieve success--

That is earthly,

And that divides us.

Hate and prejudice and assumptions and the violent words and actions it can lead to--

That is earthly,

And that divides us.

None of those things are of God.

Jesus divides us from the things that divide us.

In this sense,

The cross was not a unifier--

It was a divider.

In this sense,

Jesus' death and resurrection was not an act of peace,
It was an act of division from sin and death and all evil
and that which caters to evil.

As those whose identity and life are shaped by that cross, death
and resurrection of Christ,

We seek peace,

But we also live in division--

Our life is a call to live divided--

Divided from that which is not of God.

In baptism,

Water and Word have marked us as distinct and divided
from the ways of the world.

In Holy Communion,

Christ's body and blood feeds us with food that forgives,
and strengthens,

and, yes, divides us from sin and divides us
for service,

And awareness,

And advocacy for others.

In this gathering right now,

We are living division.

Divided from those who outside these walls,

But not in a way that makes us better or more
holy--

We are divided in a way that should bother
us,

We are divided in a way that should
urge us to unity.

Who is not here?

Who should be here?

Who desperately needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus
Christ today,

And which one of us is going to tell them and invite
them?

Division isn't a comfortable feeling.

It's unsettling,

And it doesn't feel right.

Because it's not.

It's not where we ultimately belong,

It's not where our hearts and our spirits find rest and
home.

Unity is our home,

The peace of Christ is where we belong.

It's where the whole world belongs.

But as Jesus reminds us today,

He didn't come to bring peace to the earth as it is now.

He knew he would bring division.

He knew that his life and ministry would
divide us from one another,

And would be unsettling,

And uncomfortable,

And hard to follow.

But he also knew that his death and resurrection will unite us
once more.

And we trust in that, too.

For we are never divided from Christ,
We are never divided from the work of Christ--
From continual work against all the forces of this world
that are not of God.