

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
"A Different Kind of Peace"  
Luke 12:49-56  
8/18/13

How many of you grew up as a middle child?

I have a sister who is two years older and a sister who is two years younger.

And although my sisters might say otherwise, "One trait of a middle child is that they often play a peacemaking role in their family. Middle children are often not comfortable with conflict and so they look for ways to resolve it.

But that's not just middle children right?

Most people try to avoid conflict.

So there's a part of me and I would guess a part of you,

that is uncomfortable with the picture of Jesus we see in today's Gospel.

What does Jesus mean, when he says, "Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division"

Doesn't that contradict what Jesus taught in other places...

like when he said in the Sermon on the Mount "Blessed are the peacemakers"

and when He taught us to "love our enemies"

and at the time of his arrest, when He told Peter to put his sword away?

How many times have you been in Bible study, or you're reading your Bible at home...

and you come across a passage that jumps out at you, because it seems to contradict something else you've read in the Bible?

When that happens, if we don't have some good tools for Scriptural interpretation

we can get tripped up by these passages. We can just be left thinking the Bible is full of contradictions.

"Some people say it says this and some people say it says that"

Well, how are we ever going to decide?

Unfortunately, many people just throw up their hands, and give up.

Or they think that the Truth of the Bible is just a matter of personal opinion.

But that doesn't have to happen. And today's Gospel reading, gives us a good opportunity to develop some of the tools we need, when we come across a difficult passage.

So, this morning I'd like to share one of the most helpful things that I've learned when it comes to understanding difficult passages. It's a basic principle of Scriptural interpretation where you look for passages of Scripture that we call **normative**.

Another way of saying that is to say: that there are passages of Scripture that give us the most basic, core truths about who God is and about who we are as God's people

And so when we look at today's Gospel, one of the reasons we are uncomfortable with it, is because one of the normative ways that we understand God, is that God is a God of Peace. God works to bring about reconciliation and peace.

First of all between Himself and His Creation.  
In Christ, He reconciles us to Himself.

And second, when there is division between God's people, he calls us to be ministers of reconciliation.  
We are called to forgive and to be at peace with one another.

But when we look more closely at today's Gospel what we find is not a normative passage but something that's referred to as a corrective passage.

A corrective passage of Scripture, is one that doesn't contradict, but actually reinforces and gives greater meaning to the normative text.

Let me explain how that works.

At the beginning of Luke, chapter 12 Jesus tells his disciples to "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

What He means is that instead of receiving His teaching about God's Kingdom the Pharisees were going around turning people against Jesus.

They were trying to convince everyone that Jesus was the troublemaker. That Galilean, as they called Him, was hanging out with sinners and tax collectors, and other unworthy people.

"If the people really wanted unity" the Pharisees said,  
"they should stick with the teachings and the traditions of the Pharisees and the temple leaders.

But they weren't talking about God's kind of unity.  
They were talking about unity at any price.  
It's like when the prophet Jeremiah warned about the false teachers who went around saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace."

That's why Jesus calls the Pharisees, hypocrites.

You see Jesus' teaching here in today's Gospel, is a corrective teaching...  
 It's corrective because Jesus is saying, "Yes unity, but not unity at any price."  
 "Yes, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but don't be afraid of those who are offended by the Gospel."  
 "Don't let that keep you from being faithful."

Do you remember what Jesus taught his disciples when they went into a town, but were not welcomed? He said "shake the dust off ... and go on to the next town" right?

Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all."

Notice the two qualifications: If possible ... as far as it depends upon you

Remember, the cross of Christ is an offense to this world.  
 It's an offense to our prideful self that wants to be in charge.  
 It's an offense to all of us, when we prefer to hide our sins in the darkness.  
 It's an offense, when we are too embarrassed to talk about our faith, or invite a friend or neighbor to worship.

At that level, at the level of being too concerned what others may think of us, I think we all fall short.

Now let's look at a second tool for how to understand this passage.  
 And we see it by studying verse 51 more closely.

Sometimes it helps to have a Bible Handbook, or a commentary, or a trusted on-line source.  
 And by looking up specific words, we gain a new insight.

For example, when you look up the word "peace" in verse 51, you find out that, in the original language the word is ... "saino"  
 And you find out that "saino" refers to a feeling of momentary satisfaction, or a superficial feeling of peace.

But that's not the kind of peace Jesus is talking about in John, chap. 14, where He says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives."

In that particular verse, the Greek word for peace, is "Slomo" not "saino"  
 And Slomo always means, "a deep inner serenity"  
 the kind of peace you can find, even in the middle of a crisis.

So back to Luke 12, Jesus is saying, "Do you think that I have come to bring "saino" a momentary superficial feeling of peace."

No, "I have come to bring, "a confident, lasting peace."

"The peace I give," Jesus says, "is a peace that doesn't depend on your momentary circumstances."

And sometimes that starts with division.

One of Marin's friends is a pastor. But when she first announced to her parents that she felt God calling her to become a pastor and enter the seminary, do you know what they said?

Let's just say they were not pleased, and they suggested that maybe she should choose a different career like law or medicine.

Her call to ministry did not bring peace at first. But rather division.

What Jesus is doing, is echoing the Old Testament prophets.

When Israel compromised their faith, the prophets declared that before there can be new life, there must be a purification, an end to the old.

That's what God does in Holy Baptism. God gives us the peace that comes from having our sins washed away, purified, forgiven.

And the fact is, we can't buy that kind of peace.

We can't make that kind of peace. We can't manufacture it through our own efforts

We can try to pretend we have peace, by sweeping conflict under the rug.

Ultimately, we can only receive that kind of peace. It's a gift. A gift from God.

That's the kind of peace that restores families.

When God takes a person's heart, and burns away the chaff of our pride.

When God cleanses our minds of all our bitterness and resentment.

When God does business with our sin.

Ultimately, the peace that Jesus brings,  
the peace that Jesus wants for each and every one of us,  
is a peace that can only be found in Him.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you.

I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."<sup>1</sup>

May the Peace of Jesus be yours today. Amen

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<sup>1</sup> John 14: 27