

August 14, 2022

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 12:49-56

Our Lord's words this morning are very harsh and hard to listen too. This is not the loving and understanding Jesus that we are use to. Some how in my mind I see Him shaking a box of matches. Are we missing something in the reading this morning? Is it possible that the meaning of Jesus's words have changed over time? Did what He said at the time have two or three meanings?

In the first line Jesus talks about fire and lighting things up. It seems that He is not talking about starting a physical fire. Unlike the ones we see on the West and East coast at this time. Is Jesus talking about the fall of Jerusalem in the years to come? Jesus is actually talking about a spiritual fire. One that will take hold of His disciples and apostles and bring about great change in the world!

The fire that Jesus is actually talking about is Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit came amongst the disciples and apostles as tongues of fire over their heads. From that moment the Holy Spirit inspired and motivated

the disciples to spread the Good News to all the Earth. To make disciples in every nation. The fire that Jesus is speaking about is the gifts of the Holy Spirit being poured out as tongues of fire upon the disciples.

In the next line things get stranger also. Jesus is talking about baptism. He is talking about it in a very strange way. For you and I when we say baptism it usually means a baby and some water. Not so in this case. Scholars have said that Jesus is actually talking about His passion and death at the hands of the Roman. When He died on the cross. In reality, Jesus is being very prophetic. He is talking about His future death. The Holy Spirit cannot come until Jesus has died and rose from the dead. Remember that the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost 50 days after Jesus's resurrection. Jesus explains it better than me in John's Gospel, ch7 verse 39, "But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet risen from the dead." Jesus goes on to explain a little bit about what the Holy Spirit will do when It comes. John 14: 26, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name. He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all the things I said to you." Sounds like this is a very good thing for those of us who believe in Jesus and His Good News.

Earlier in Luke's gospel in chapter two, Simeon prophesized about the infant Jesus in his arms. Simeon said that Jesus was the salvation of God. Simeon then goes on to tell Mary that Jesus is destined for the fall

and rise of many in Israel. Jesus would be a change maker in His life. Jesus's words in verses 51-53 are tinged with a strong dose of irony. Indeed Jesus came to bring peace to our world but a strong witness and belief in His truth can cause problems even in families. Some people will come to believe in His teachings and others will not.

Things get stranger yet as we read on. Jesus is anxious about His coming passion and death. He wishes it would come quickly. So that the fire of the Holy Spirit may be poured out upon His disciples. Then the church will be birthed and take shape as the disciples preach to Good News to all the nations of the world. Being a disciple of Jesus's and preaching the Good News will have a price. Some people will accept the Good News into their hearts and others will not. Some people will hate and kill the disciples because of their Good News message!

There is a sign outside of a BBQ store here in Kenora. It reads, "Come in side, play with fire and see what happens." A child reading this will have a very different understanding of these words. You just do not play with fire because nothing good comes from it. An adult will have a completely different understanding of these words. It is an invitation to learn new skills for the grill and get new ideas. Context is everything. Just like the message this morning. When Jesus said these words they probably had three or four meanings to the listeners of that day. Hearing them today, they seem harsh and difficult to understand what is actually being said. Sadly they can be twisted to meet the needs of

certain people. This is why knowing cultural context is so important in unpacking the scriptures. Many times what we read is not what it originally meant. Good scholarship is so important. God Bless you all and have a great week, Pastor D