

Pentecost 10C (8/18/2019)

Jeremiah 23:23-29

Psalm 82

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

Luke 12:49-56

"We all must leave home to find the real and larger home" (Richard Rohr). The call of discipleship leads us outside the confines of our original formation. If Jesus' claim on our lives does not break with the past in challenging and meaningful ways, then he is nothing more than a mascot for the status quo. But, Jesus is no standard bearer for the ways of our forebears. His word is like fire, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces.

I wonder what self-proclaimed "family values" Christians do with the teaching in our Gospel from Luke today. If you're not troubled by what Jesus says, then you're not paying attention:

Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided:

father against son

and son against father,

mother against daughter

and daughter against mother,

mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law

and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

What are we to make of this jarring pronouncement? **Don't faith and family go hand in hand? What does Jesus mean when he insists that his ministry will cause conflict among loved ones?**

It's safe to say that he doesn't advocate division between family members; he's not insisting on conflict in his name. Jesus is the Prince of

Peace,¹ the embodiment of God's "tender mercy," the light "from on high" by which God will "guide [our] feet into the way of peace," to quote Zechariah's beautiful prophecy at the outset of Luke's story.²

But, while Jesus' teaching is not prescriptive, it certainly is descriptive of the life of his first disciples.³ Those who forsake conventional family and community ties to follow an upstart rabbi are repeatedly faced with conflict, even with members of their own households.⁴ **Exchanging one way of life for a radically different way of life is bound to engender resistance from those who knew you first.**

This break between past and future is likely a source of grief. But, can we also think of it as a necessary step along the path of spiritual growth? Consider this extended reflection from Richard Rohr:

[Excerpt from *Falling Upward*, pp.83-5]

"We all must leave home to find the real and larger home." In other words, **the call of discipleship leads us outside the confines of our original formation. If Jesus' claim on our lives does not break with the past in challenging and meaningful ways, then he's nothing more than a mascot for the status quo. But, Jesus is no standard bearer for the ways of our forebears. His word is like fire, to borrow Jeremiah's words in our first reading, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces.**

¹ Isaiah 9:6.

² Luke 1:79.

³ See Audrey West, in *Feasting on the Word*, Year C, Vol. 3, 360.

⁴ See David J. Lose, <http://www.davidlose.net/2016/08/pentecost-13-c-pursuing-a-faith-that-matters/>.

Maybe you've known both the discomfort and enlightenment of moving beyond the boundaries imposed by your upbringing. Maybe you've known both the pain and hope of change. But, even as your process of growth has likely disrupted your original structures, to include perhaps the structure of your family, I hope you've also discovered the promise of new and abundant life. **Dear church, outside the crab bucket is a world of possibilities for making meaning and nurturing relationship and community informed by the love of Christ. God grant you the vision to see it and the courage to embrace it.**