

Sunday, August 14, 2022 – Luke 12:14-56

People of Peace – indeed, peace be with you. Thank you.

What a joyful and hope-filled Gospel text for today. Jesus sure outdid himself with the warm fuzzies, right?

At this point in the Gospel of Luke, if we were to be reading this in order by chapter and verse, Jesus is deep in the midst of his preaching and teaching, all while he travels towards Jerusalem. You may remember that Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem marks the beginning of Holy Week.

So at this point in the Gospel, Jesus has “set his face” and is on the move. Time is of the essence. There can be no delay.

You can almost feel the intensity, the passion, the frustration of Jesus as he addresses the vast crowd before him: “I came to bring fire... Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!”

I will admit, my first response to reading this week's Gospel text was something akin to, “Jesus brings division? Seriously? (exhale) What does this mean?”

Jesus and his followers certainly knew about divisions in their time.

Tensions between the Hebrew people and the Roman Empire. Issues around political leaders, unfair taxes and unjust lawmakers.

Distrust towards Samaritans and other neighboring people groups.
Religious disagreements between the established Jewish scholars and the growing Jesus movement.

We, too, know about division.

Our imaginations are full of division.

The Rebels against the Galactic Empire. Dumbledore's Army against the Death-eaters. Team Jacob against Team Edward. The Seattle Mariners against the Texas Rangers.

Our imaginations are full of division, because our lives are full of division.

Our political climate in this country is pure division. Division stemming from issues like abortion and reproductive rights, immigration and resettlement, and gun safety and control. Division resulting from white supremacy, systemic racism, sexism, ableism and ageism.

If I were to poll you all, this list of divisions would surely grow.

We know about divisions.

Jesus and the crowd following him knew about divisions. And yet Jesus felt the need to take a moment in the midst of his journey to Jerusalem, to remind the crowd, the disciples, and you and I, that Jesus is shaking things up.

Growth, improvement, and progress all require division and then reconciliation to move forward.

The work of the Church is not to sit and do nothing, to watch the clouds rising in the west or to feel the south wind blowing. We are not just here to be the Weather Channel.

The work of the Church is to wait, right Pastor Nate? We are called to pay attention to our present time, to prepare and be ready for when the Master calls.

This last week was the triennial gathering of the ELCA Churchwide Gathering. All 65 synods sent teams of voting members to Columbus, Ohio to dwell together, to worship together, to pay attention and prepare together.

I want to share a couple action items of note from this week-long assembly, much of which you can watch on YouTube if you so desire. Also, [the Living Lutheran magazine published online short recaps](#) of each day of the Assembly.

Here are two of the many takeaways about what your Church (capital C) is up to, two things that mean a lot to me (taken, in part, from the Living Lutheran daily recaps):

By faith, your Church voted to encourage support and prayer for people affected by the overturning of Roe v. Wade, including rostered ministers and lay staff at congregations and social ministry organizations. It also called for conversation on the church's teaching on abortion and related topics.

By faith, your Church voted to call for ELCA ministries and partners to engage in deeper collaboration with Indigenous partners, including incorporating land acknowledgments as part of public gatherings, exploring the creation of restorative justice programs, and studying funding needs and sources for ELCA Indigenous congregations and service ministries.

We know about division. Some of us experience division on deeper levels than others. Each of your lived experience has encountered division in your own ways. We the Church, the Body of Christ, seek to carry the burden of division with you, with each other.

The various divisions of our shared life together are not solely political, not solely social, but are also deeply theological.

As we think about the divisions in the world today, we are called to also consider how these issues affect the very heart of God, as well.

If we just stick to paying attention to the “clouds to the west” and the “winds to the south,” then our eyes will only ever be on the horizon, on the weather that may or may not come.

Jesus calls us to “interpret the present time,” to pay attention to the divisions, issues, and relationships that we encounter in the here and now.

Because of the work all y’all have done to be a Reconciling in Christ congregation; to be welcoming, inclusive, and affirming; to be committed to work of justice and anti-racism: you are well positioned to address the issues of division that affect our world today.

People of Peace, this is sacred work. By faith, continue to prepare, and to pay attention. Jesus is on the move, and he is calling us forth to bear his Good News in our present time.

Amen.