

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 17 August 2025 - The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Lectionary Readings (*depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on*)

Jeremiah 23.23–29; Psalm 82; Hebrews 11.29—12.2; Luke 12.49–56

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Kate Pateman, LLM in the Leverington, Newton & Tydd St Giles Benefice

If, as a group of Christians, we were to be asked, perhaps for an opinion poll or market research, to explain what it was that Jesus Christ came to earth to do, it is probably unlikely that our reply would be that he came to bring fire to the earth, or to cause division and unrest among his followers. After all, these are not the messages that usually come to mind when we think about Jesus. We are much more likely, when asked about Jesus, to talk about his coming to bring peace to the world, or to tell of his commandments to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. These are the attributes we are most likely to ascribe to our Lord, the Prince of Peace and of God of Love.

So, it seems that Jesus's words in today's passage from the Gospel of Luke set us a difficult challenge as we think about their meaning and look for their significance for us in today's world. These are not the "comfortable words" that Jesus gives us elsewhere in the Gospels. These are difficult and disturbing words that challenge us to really think about Jesus's work and what it was that he came into the world to do.

The context of our reading is very important. The passage comes at a turning point in Jesus's earthly mission, which is approaching its powerful climax. He has turned towards Jerusalem, where he knows that he will have to face dreadful suffering at the hands of the Jewish authorities and the Roman occupiers. He knows that he is travelling toward his eventual death. As he travels, he is teaching his followers about the Kingdom of God, and working to prepare them as much as he can for what he knows is to come.

This was a time of great political tension in Judea, and the people of Israel were longing for the promised Messiah to come and set them free from oppression and bring peace and prosperity to the land. But what Jesus offers is not peace, he says, but conflict and division for those who choose to follow him. The fire which he tells them he has come to bring, and which he wishes was already kindled, is the fire of transformation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus's words reflect those of John the Baptist, earlier in Luke's Gospel, when John told the people of Judea coming to him for baptism in the waters of the River Jordan to expect one who would "*baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire*" (3:16).

When Jesus tells the crowd that he has a baptism with which to be baptised, he is not talking about his baptism by John, when heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. The baptism he is referring to here is the ordeal of his own death on the cross, which he knows he has to undergo for our sake. A death that is the ultimate expression of God's love for his creation, taking on the sins of the world for our salvation, and to bring us at last to the Father's Kingdom. Knowing then that this is what the immediate future holds for him, it is little wonder that Jesus tells the crowd that he is under stress until that ordeal is completed.

Jesus tells his listeners not to expect him to bring peace to the earth. No, not peace but division. Even division within households, with family members divided against each other. For prioritising loyalty and commitment to him will take precedence over the views of family, friends, or even over one's way of life. Becoming a follower of Jesus Christ is not going to be an easy path for those who choose it. The Gospel of the Kingdom is a disruptive influence on us too, it demands our wholehearted devotion now, as it did those first followers.

As disciples of Jesus today, we also are called to embrace the Holy Spirit in the fire of transformation, even when to do so may divide views or bring discord or disturb the status quo. Following Jesus will sometimes call for sacrifice on our part, and it may for us also bring with it the fire of change and disruption, rather than calm peace or a cosy love. We must learn to recognise the signs that God's Kingdom is near and be prepared to work towards its establishment here on Earth. To do this we must be bold in telling out the glory of God. The glory shown in the empowering love of his Son, our Saviour, who willingly gave his life in the baptism of death so that we might have eternal life.

Can we welcome the fire of the Holy Spirit for transformation? Can we see the signs that he is at work in the world today, bringing the Kingdom of God? Above all, can we commit ourselves, fully and without reserve, to love God and to accept his unmerited love for us and then love others, even those who are on the other side from us in discussions about doctrine, politics, race, or creed.

It is only in fully accepting the love of God, and by the unrestricted love that we offer to God and to his creation, that we can prepare for the time that will surely come, when his Kingdom reigns in Heaven and on Earth. When that time comes, there will be no more division or conflict, but only "*the Peace of God, which passes all understanding*" (Philippians 4:7).

Amen!

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how the disciples felt when they heard Jesus' words?
- I wonder how you feel about what Jesus said to his disciples?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder why Jesus said that he didn't come to bring peace to the earth, but rather division?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

That we and all people may discern with wisdom, what is happening and what is needed, let us pray to the Lord.

Keep your Church faithful, ever looking to Jesus as her source and her goal. As we serve you here on earth, let us always remember the witness of those who have gone before and who now support us with their prayers.

[Specific petitions for Church, clergy, ministers, congregations]

Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.

Give wisdom to us all, to understand the needs of our time and to work for justice and peace even when this is costly for us. May those who hold power and authority in the present day be ready to learn from the wisdom of the past.

[Specific petitions for the environment, the peace of world, nations, governments, etc]

Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.

Give us grace in our families and let each generation value what the others have to give. Bless with love and harmony the families of our church and neighbours, and those who are part of work and social communities.

[Specific petitions for families, neighbours, colleagues, local societies, charities, family and children's organisations, schools, clubs, etc]

Lord, in your mercy; hear our prayer.

Come with your healing power into broken and divided families. Bring a peace which reconciles and restores. Give patience to those who are beset with long-running challenges and the resilience to keep on trying to bring wholeness.

[Specific petitions for families in crisis, counselling practitioners, children's workers, etc]

*Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.***

Have mercy on all who are sick in body, mind or spirit. Give to the suffering the comfort of your presence. Bring healing to broken bodies, bring peace to suffering minds, bring calm to troubled spirits, and in your tenderness, wipe the tears and ease the pain.

[Specific petitions for the sick in body, mind or spirit]

*Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.***

We pray for those who have died; especially for those whose death has been sudden and unexpected and those who have undergone much suffering. Grant to them all, rest and peace in your heavenly Kingdom, where there is no more pain and all sorrow is taken away.

[Specific petitions for the departed, the bereaved, year's mind]

*Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer.***

We pray through Christ that we may rightly interpret and faithfully perform his will.

*Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen***

Adapted from: *Leading Intercessions*, Raymond Chapman (Canterbury Press, 2006)

Suggested hymns/songs

Give us the wings of faith to rise
Judge eternal, throned in splendour
Let saints on earth in concert sing
Lord, for the years
O thou who camest from above
The head that once was crowned with thorns
The Lord will come and not be slow
Through the night of doubt and sorrow
Thy Kingdom come, O God
Ye that know the Lord is gracious

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>

- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)