

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood, Aug 14, 2016

**Notes for the sermon on Dealing with Division
Ps 82 and Luke 12:49-56 – Sermon Text = Luke 12:51**

***Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth?
No, I tell you, but rather division.***

[Hymns = 287, 712, 792 in the Canadian Presbyterian *Book of Praise*]



Key Ideas

1. Who is writing this and who is reading or listening to it? Luke is a Gentile physician, a companion of Paul in the mission to the Gentiles or non-Jews in the last third of the first century. The task is to commend the Gospel – that God, the Creator, healed the divisions between God and humanity, between humans and other humans, and within humans themselves by the reconciling sacrifice of Jesus, the Redeemer, on the cross and that salvation is being spread to the whole of creation through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit – this salvation comes in the form of the Reign of God or the Commonwealth of God – a vision of a world that lives in justice, peace, and joy – in the latter third of the first century, the small, scattered Christian communities that Paul and Luke are serving are being largely ignored and frequently persecuted – it's a tough time to participate in the Christian mission – you could get killed for this stuff – so Luke and his audience live in a deeply divided world – and one of the deepest of divisions is how people respond to their deepest convictions about who they are and who God is – that's the kind of division Luke is writing about here – and, as we know all too well from Paul's writings, these small, struggling fellowships of the friends of Jesus are divided within themselves on how to understand and follow Jesus – more division to worry about
2. And these are divisions that we experience today – in our country, we face more indifference than hostility – but in other countries, some from which participants in this congregation have come, faith is a life and death matter – and the church of Jesus Christ is sadly divided into denominations and, within those denominations, into factions and parties arguing over how to interpret the Scriptures' witness to Jesus Christ on all sorts of matters – we humans seem to be addicted to division – but is it the division that Jesus claims to bring? – that's the key question that fascinated me this week

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3. In Luke's design of his gospel, he has placed a larger collection of stories and sayings into the section of the gospel leading up to Jerusalem and the crucifixion/resurrection/ascension – these are gathered and passed on to encourage churches experiencing hostile divisions in the world around them and suffering confusing divisions within their communities – as I read these accounts this week, this is the key division Jesus brought into the world – ***are you a conscious and committed participant in the Commonwealth of God or not?*** – that's what this whole section is Luke's gospel is all about – will you decide to be in, with, and for Christ in grateful response to Christ being in, with and for you? – it's not an easy choice – the disciples had hard times making it - and its one that needs to be made over and over again as we grow in our love for and knowledge of the Creator and Redeemer of this creation – will we outrage God by ignoring or rejecting the loving salvation offered in Jesus Christ? – the kind of ignorance and rejection that Jesus found in those who turned the temple into a marketplace of privilege and oppression – or will we take up the mission of God and work with the Holy Trinity in pursuit of justice, peace, and joy – at one important level, the order of these goals of the gospel are crucial – you can't have true peace without justice, and you can't have true joy without justice and peace – all are gifts of God that we enjoy by God's grace, but the reason we have been given those gifts is to create space for relationships in which they are realized – that will create division from those who benefit from injustice, war, and despair

At this stage in our ponderings, then ...

Here are two possibilities to continue to consider as we continue to discern how best to follow Jesus in our worlds of fear and division:

- the divisions that Jesus brought are divisions that serve God's ultimate desire of justice, peace, and joy
- we experience those gifts of God as we participate together in God's mission of reconciling love in the world, inviting all peoples to recognize and live for their common source of flourishing as God's beloved creatures