

**Sermon    August 14, 2022            Luke 12:49-53**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We often imagine that Jesus only brings good things. “God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son” and things like that. However, in his death, Jesus actually tore the world in two. He says we are either for him or against him. In the judgement there are only the sheep (saved) and the goats (damned). There is no middle ground. Jesus did not just bring peace, he also brought the conflict that rages between faith and unbelief, between good and evil, heaven and earth.

Jesus would have us be prepared at all times to meet our maker. It is foolish going about our lives imagining we have plenty of time before we will need to give an answer for how we have lived our lives. According to the CDC, someone dies from an accident every three minutes. That’s 175,000 people every year in our country who die an accidental death. No wonder Jesus urges us to be prepared!

As long as the church is in this world there will be trouble for those in the church. Jesus came to bring us peace with God, but peace with God in Jesus Christ means we will be at odds with many others in the world, and sometimes even in the church itself. When Jesus returned to his home town of Nazareth and taught in their synagogue, they tried to throw him off the cliff. The religious elite hated Jesus and so for years plotted to kill him and finally – to our benefit – got their wish. God’s priests who were responsible for performing all the sacrifices in the temple outdid themselves when they actually sacrificed Jesus, the once-for-all Lamb of God on the cross.

The beat goes on. God teaches that the lives of the unborn are more than vegetable or merely animal life, but human lives created in his

image and known by him before conception. Therefore, the church holds unborn life to be sacred, and many followers of Jesus run pregnancy centers that support mothers and help them have their babies rather than get abortions. Since the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, hundreds of these centers have been blocked on the internet, attacked, vandalized, or burned by abortionists. Jesus said we will be at odds with the world. He was right. There are plenty of division within the Christian church: Roman Catholic; Orthodox; Lutheran; Presbyterian; Baptist; Contemporary; Traditional; etc. They all claim they have the correct teaching of Jesus. How can that be? Jesus brings division for sure!

It's interesting that in the book of Revelation, in John's vision of the City of God coming down to earth, the city has walls. Why would there need to be walls? The walls symbolize that there is a distinction, division, and separation between the holy realm of God and the unholy. Jesus is the one who brings the holiness of God to us.

**“But I have a baptism to undergo, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”** Luke 12:50

Jesus speaks of his baptism. Baptism here has the idea of an overwhelming flood. If anyone was ever baptized with an overwhelming flood it was Jesus! Jesus had two baptisms. His first baptism was with water. He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan river. In that baptism, the Holy Spirit descended onto Jesus and the Father spoke from heaven, declaring Jesus was his beloved son, in whom he was well-pleased. In this water baptism, Jesus represented all of us. He lived an absolutely holy and perfect life. This is why the Father said he was well-pleased with Jesus. When we are baptized, we assume the identity of Jesus. His holiness is given to us. When we are baptized into Christ, we “Put on Christ,” as the Bible says.

Jesus' second baptism was by fire. This is what we recount in Holy Week. It started with all that plotting against him. That led to his betrayal, arrest, trial, beating, and whipping. Finally, as he hung on the cross, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?" So much for "This is my son in whom I am well-pleased." Now Jesus was baptized with the fire of God's wrath against sin and every evil. He was burned with the fires of hell, and died a sinner's death.

Since all God's judgement he could ever hold against us was poured out on Jesus, we are released from judgement, guilt, and the condemnation of God. We are free to be his holy, joyful people! Concerning Jesus' baptisms, the apostle John writes:

**For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. 1 John 5:7-8**

The Spirit fell on Jesus while he was standing in the Jordan river. He was baptized with the water of the Jordan. When a spear was thrust into Jesus' side as he hung on the cross, John writes in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of his gospel that water and blood flowed down. The Spirit, water, and blood confirm that Jesus is the one who redeems us from death and is the one in whom we are given the eternal, blessed life with God and those who belong to him.

Living in these gifts of God, we are called to live in peace. We are told to avoid conflict. Jesus says those who make peace will be called the sons of God. However, Jesus assures us we will know conflict and division because we bear the name of Jesus. We don't have to go far to find this division between us and the world. Here we are called to stand firm in our confession of faith. We do not back down when we are ridiculed because we say Jesus is Savior and Judge. We are also called to continue in what is good and right in a world that is going off the

rails with gender identity, human sexuality, and the meaning of what is marriage and family, and so much more.

Martin Luther also understood and warns us that to live in Jesus is to live under the cross. Troubles, difficulties, strife, and suffering is the norm for believers because we live in a fallen world that does not understand the ways of God nor does it care about them. It is a conundrum to us that Jesus teaches his strength is made perfect in our weakness.

God strengthen you as you endure division, attack, and trouble for the sake of the Name, for in that Name you are a member in the blessed, eternal, redeemed family of God by the baptism and the cross of Jesus! Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.

Pastor Ron Breight                      Christ Lutheran Church   Forest Hills, Pennsylvania

*Join us for worship online! Visit our website [christlutheranfh.org](http://christlutheranfh.org), click the blue Facebook link at the bottom of the page, and you will be taken to our Facebook page. There you can view our 10 am Sunday service live or watch it later at your convenience. The Sunday service is also available for viewing on our YouTube page – Christ Lutheran Forest Hills, PA.*