

Sunday, August 17, 2025 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel: Luke 12:49-56

49 - I came to bring fire to the earth.

51 - Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!

52 - Five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.

53 - 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.

I think of people today – including those who grew up in non-Christian and other-religious-faith families – who have been rejected and are even being abused by their biological families.

I assume this was the circumstance of many who were coming to faith in Jesus at the time that Luke was writing.

In 2 Corinthians 11: 24-25 Paul writes, "Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning."

Is some of this part of the way he was treated by his own family and people he grew up with when he was back in Tarsus – after becoming a follower of Jesus and being too controversial a person in Jerusalem – and before Barnabas came to Tarsus to find him and bring him to Antioch to help with the ministry there?

Fire and division rather than peace is also happening within the larger church as people are holding and fiercely advocating for totally irreconcilable positions on deeply felt subjects.

Second Reading: Hebrews 11:29--12:2

The author continues reminding us of the great heroes of the faith.

11: 29 - By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned.

30 - By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days.

Would these events actually be encouraging if they were just a story and not something that actually happened?

31 - By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

Joshua 2: 9-10 – "I know that the Lord has given you the land, for we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt."

32 - And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—

33 - Who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises

Courage and faithfulness in daring – courage and faithfulness in enduring

33-34 - Shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire

Daniel 6: 10 – Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously.

Daniel 3: 17-18 – "If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up."

34 - Escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

35 - Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection.

36 - Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

37 - They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented—

38 - Of whom the world was not worthy.

They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

39-40 - Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

12: 1 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses

The great heroes of the Bible and the great heroes of the faith are in the grandstands cheering you on

Who in your family who has gone on before you is/are in the grandstands cheering you on?

What great hero of the faith would you like to run a lap with?

What would they say to you? What kind of conversation would you like to have with them?

Let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely

Weights are not bad. They are morally neutral. Sometimes runners will even train with weights. But weights by their very nature will weigh you down.

Sins, however, are bad. They are not morally neutral. And they can cling so closely.

What weights and sins do you need to let go of and get rid of?

Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us

2 - Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith

It is always important to look to and anticipate the finish line

Jesus is at the finish line – cheering you on

Who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Think of what Jesus has endured for you. What can you now endure for Him?