

THURSDAY 22ND OCTOBER

Fire and Division on Earth

Luke 12:49-53

We have some passionate and disturbing words from Jesus today. He shocked his disciples when he declared that he would cast fire and cause division rather than peace upon the earth. What kind of fire did Jesus have in mind? In the imagery of the Old Testament, fire is a symbol of God's powerful presence. We remember Moses at the burning bush, the pillar of fire that accompanied the Israelites by night as they wandered through the desert to the promised land, as well as the tongues of fire that hovered over the disciples at Pentecost. The image of fire was also used to symbolize God's glory (Ezekiel 1:4, 13), his protective presence (2 Kings 6:17), his holiness (Deut. 4:24), righteous judgment (Zechariah 13:9), and his wrath against sin (Isaiah 66:15-16). It is also used of the Holy Spirit who purifies and cleanses us. In today's world, every morning we see and hear multiple stories of division and violence: in families, cities and countries. Perhaps the most frightening stories are the acts of violence and destruction that take place in our own cities, our own neighbourhoods and perhaps within our own families.

What is the message Jesus is trying to convey to us? Is he trying to frighten us? Or is he simply hoping to awaken us? Is Jesus trying to motivate us to live peacefully, lovingly, cooperatively and respectfully with each and every person on earth, even the individuals we may not like or agree with?

Now, take a moment and imagine a world where every single person was respected and honoured simply because he or she is a human being whom God created in love. You are one of those individuals and so am I. Every individual on earth was created from God's loving heart. And yet, we war upon one another with our words, our actions, and our violence. Today I invite you to think of an individual with whom you struggle. It may be someone who has hurt or angered you, or it might be a person you simply don't like or one who grates on you. Now, quiet yourself and imagine that person in your mind for a moment or two. Then surround that individual with acceptance, peace and joy. Hold this person in your mind for two or three minutes. You have given this individual a loving gift today. True, they may not consciously recognize what you have done. However, their spirit will know that someone has gifted and graced them today. Be alert and attentive! Perhaps you will receive a similar gift!