

Proper 15C  
Trinity, Bend  
Isaiah 5:1-7  
Hebrews 11: 29—12:2  
Luke 12: 49-56

“I came to bring fire upon the earth, --- how I wish it were blazing right now! .....Do you think I've come to smooth things over and make everything nice? Not so. I've come to disrupt and confront!”  
These are the words of Jesus in today's gospel, as written in the Message.

Not really comforting words. They are one of the hardest sayings of Jesus. The people who heard this knew that fire was a symbol of judgment. Jesus was coming to bring the judgment of God.

When we hear these words of Jesus we don't get a picture of a mild, soft-spoken Jesus but one of a strong speaking man of conviction. He is not one to mince words. There is no concern about being nice.

But he is more concerned that people follow the ways of God rather than the ways of the world.

In a *Christian Century* article Teresa Berger said, “ If our world were nothing but a place of created goodness and profound beauty, a space of flourishing for all, just and life-giving for all in God’s creation, then Jesus’ challenge would be deeply troubling.

If, on the other hand, our world is deeply marred and scarred, death-dealing for many life forms, with systems of meaning that are exploitative and non-sustainable, then redemption can come only when those systems are shattered and consumed by fire. Life cannot (re-) emerge without confrontation.

This is the basis of the conflict Jesus envisions. He came not to disturb a nice world but to shatter the disturbing and death-dealing systems of meaning that stifle life.”

In the sermon to the Hebrews we <sup>heard</sup> hear of our ancestors some of whom administered justice, obtained promises, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword and won strength out of weakness.

While others were mocked, flogged, even imprisoned and some were put to death. All of these held to their principles by faith. It was their belief that God calls us to a better world that encouraged them to live by that faith knowing that's what they were called to do.

Jesus, when he walked this earth broke the rules if love demanded it. He spoke with and spiritually healed the Samaritan woman. He healed people on the Sabbath. He touched the untouchables.

We have saints in our day who decided to follow the call to walk in love no matter what the price.

This past week we celebrated the life of Jonathan Daniels. He was a seminarian in 1965, who answered the call of Dr. Martin Luther King to march from Selma, Alabama the state capital of Montgomery.

While in Selma he stayed with an African-American family. During that time he worked to integrate the local Episcopal Church by taking a group of young black students to that church. The people of the church were not welcoming. They did not want black students worshipping with them.

During the summer of 1965 he worked in Selma to find assistance for those in need. As well as, registered black people to vote. In August of that year he was one of 29 protesters who went to Fort Deposit, Alabama to picket whites only stores. All of them were arrested and taken to jail in Hayneville.

After their release, they waited for transport to get back to Fort Deposit. While they were waiting a small group went to a local store to buy a cold drink. When they got there barring the door with a shotgun and pistol was Tom Coleman, an un-paid special deputy,. As he leveled his gun at Ruby Sales, a black girl, Daniels pushed her down and got the full blast of the shotgun.

This young man knew what it means to live in the way of love. Love that goes against the rules of the current society.

We have to make a choice to follow Jesus in the way of love or the way of the world. In doing so we will have to make difficult decisions. Some of those decisions will not agree with what our friends and family want us to do.

We live in a time where there needs to be some changes. In the last few weeks there have been 2 mass shootings, one in El Paso, TX and one in Dayton, OH. and a shooting of 6 police officers in Philadelphia, when they went to serve a warrant to a drug dealer.

We live in a time where children in our schools practice what to do if there is a shooting in their school.

~~People are living in fear as hate groups gathered to demonstrate in Portland. Then were met by anti-fascists groups.~~

It is time for us to stand up and say that the way of love is more important than living in fear.

We can make our wishes known by how we live and by what we do extra.

We can write letters, make phone calls and pray that our Congressional representatives in Washington will make meaningful changes to the gun law sales which includes universal background checks. And they will ban assault weapons. There is no need for ordinary citizens to have weapons of war.

The fire that Jesus brings is a cleansing fire. It is the fire of the love of God. We heard of this fire when Moses stood before the burning bush. We know of this fire as the fire of the Holy Spirit that came on Pentecost.

Jesus is referring to his trial and crucifixion when he talks of the baptism by fire that he must endure. We know today that crucifixion was the most humbling and painful death dealt by the Romans because it was slow and public.

This fire of love is similar to the light of faith that must shine in our hearts. It has to outshine the darkness of the world.

Eberhard Arnold said, "The light of God is the radiant flame of life, which demands love, judges the darkness of unpeace and puts to flight the coldness of injustice."

The peace that Jesus speaks about is not the peace of this world. It is the peace of God, which demands justice for the entire world.

But how do we remain in the light, the peace of God? How do we fuel the fire that Jesus brings to our hearts?

According to the sermon to the Hebrews we have to have discipline. That is the only way we can run the race <sup>is</sup> with perseverance. St Paul uses the metaphor of a runner, which is appropriate for us today.



We live in an area where running competitions, hiking and group walking are common events. *You don't do any of these things without training*

The constant discipline of prayer is necessary to keep us in touch with the will of God for our lives. It is so easy to be persuaded to follow the ways of the world. They are being put before us constantly.

The world wants us to believe that each of us is number one and don't be concerned about others.

But the way of Christ says that we are to care for those who are in need. We are to work for justice for all. We are loved so much by God that we have let that love overflow to others who do not know His love.

That may not always be the easy thing to do but it is the necessary thing to do if we are to be true followers of Jesus Christ.