

We are going to be reading from the end of the 12th chapter of Luke. The verses we are about to read are ignored by lots of church people. This is a passage which is ignored because it seems to contradict other stories which the gospel writer Luke tells about Jesus.

Many of us have heard the story from Luke about the Son who takes his inheritance and “goes freaky” and blows all of his money. But then when this prodigal son returns to his father his father takes him back in and they reconcile with one another. That is the kind of story from Jesus that we like to read and that makes sense.

Jesus as the peacemaker. Jesus as the one who reconciles broken relationships. For many of us, however, the following words from Jesus do not bring us much comfort.

Read Luke 12:49-56

For many of us, this past week and this coming week is the beginning of the school year. Many of us have begun teaching again in school and our other responsibilities in school. Some of us have been teaching our children at home. Those of us who are students have been going through orientation and meeting our new teachers either in person or on-line.

Those of us who are parents have been going through the emotions of sending our children off to school. For some that has brought tears, for others it has brought relief.

Even if you have aged out of being a parent of school aged children, you may be hearing the stories or seeing the pictures of your grandchildren heading off to school in some way. Even if none of these descriptions relate to you then you have at least noticed the additional school buses on the road. This has been a week of new beginnings for many of us.

Here at ACPC we are beginning our fall schedule of classes. There are new class opportunities beginning for children, youth, and adults today. The summer doldrums are winding down and new programs and classes are starting up.

Into this time of transition we invite two texts of Scripture which I think give us some wisdom to follow. The first Scripture is Jeremiah's call story. Jeremiah was an Old Testament prophet who lived during the time when Judah was about to be defeated by the invading Babylonians.

Judah was what remained of the Hebrew people after Israel had already been defeated. Israel was defeated by the Assyrians in 721 BC while Judah went down in 587 BC. Jeremiah gives witness to the end of Judah and the people being taken off into captivity.

Jeremiah lived and prophesized during a very difficult transition point in history. Certainly no one wants to hear that they are about to be defeated. Especially when you have been told that God brought you together in the first place. But as we heard in the first lesson, Jeremiah reluctantly accepted this call to interpret what was happening even though no one wanted to hear it.

The second lesson we read, the one from Luke, is Jesus declaring that he did not come to bring peace but instead division. He says that because of him families will break apart. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, will break apart because of him.

So both of these texts are linked in one very unsatisfying way. They are linked together by division. For Jeremiah, division because he was called to say things that people did not want to hear. History also proved Jeremiah correct. And for Luke, he says that the presence of Jesus will break some families apart.

Trying to figure out what Jesus wants you to do with your life is usually not an easy endeavor. I sometimes get jealous of people who seem to be able to clearly declare what God wants for them. However, I also find out that many of these same people become sorely disappointed when their quick judgments about God's will for their life turn out to be disappointments.

For many of us, and I include myself here, God's revelation is something that takes a long time to realize and takes one through lots of trial and error.

There are many ways to interpret these two texts. But one way I think we are invited to understand this text is to realize that following God's call in your life may lead to some disappointments and detours along the way. Seeking to figure out God's call upon you may lead to marital arguments, it may lead to conflicts between parents and children, it may lead to conflicts within congregations.

Both Jeremiah and Luke's recording of Jesus' words show us that following Jesus can sometimes lead one through very choppy waters with no clear direction.

But I think that these two Scriptures show us that we don't abandon Jesus when life gets difficult and the route becomes foggy. Jesus' words show us that to follow Jesus means that sometimes relationships have to be broken and division created. When some relationships are broken new possibilities are allowed to be seen.

But division is never final in the biblical accounts. We also discover through the Scriptures with stories like the prodigal son and other stories that division is not the final intent of Jesus' life. Stories like the prodigal son teach us that even if following Jesus leads to division that Jesus is also working to bring about healing.

The death of Jesus on a cross and his resurrection gives witness to us that Jesus accomplished the end of division.

We will be invited to take the sacrament of Holy Communion in a few moments. I love communion. Communion in a Presbyterian Church is open to all. Communion is a visible sign that division is broken down and new life in Christ is made real.

If you come into the sanctuary feeling the pain of feeling separated from mother or father or son or daughter or whomever you feel broken from, here in communion that brokenness can begin to heal.

Jesus Christ is someone who experienced all kinds of brokenness.

But in the end he turned brokenness into healing. AMEN.

+++++++++++++++++++++

-Given: August 25, 2013 in Allison Creek Pres (York, SC)