

Gospel Lesson for the Week

August 19, 2007

12th Sunday after Pentecost

Read [Luke 12:49-56](#)

Read also [Isaiah 5:1-7](#), [Hebrews 11:29–12:2](#), [Psalm 80:1-2](#), [8-19](#)

“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! (said Jesus) “I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!

I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!

From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 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.”

He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, ‘It is going to rain’; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat’, and it happens.

You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

eisegesis

You may call it “eisegesis”,
the bending of scripture
to fit my personal views,
but, if you can forgive this idiosyncrasy,
I'd like for you to notice
a curious convergence of themes
that seems to echo the current drift of things
and replicate the headlines of the day.

I'm not exactly sure
what Jesus meant when he spoke
of bringing fire to earth,
or sharp divisions on a personal basis,
or weather-signs of rain
and wind and scorching heat.
But put them all together, they spell

“Trouble” with a capital T:
Wildfires that scar an ancient forest,
Record-setting heat, cyclonic winds
All evidence of something
seriously wrong with the environment.

And all the while
humankind,
divided by race and creed and lifestyle
go their merry way hurting
and all too often killing each other—
from Newark to Baghdad
and back again to our back yard,
maybe our own family.
Hey! Is this Luke or CNN and Fox?

I guess what I am saying is
that while the precise meaning
of Jesus’ sayings may elude us
and be open to varying interpretation,
of one thing we may be sure:
His words offer a stark warning
—a warning we neglect at our own peril.
And more than this,
his words are a reminder
to be humble in the presence
of the Master teacher,
and not be given
to a know-it-all dogmatism,
but to rely on his Spirit
to open the door to truth.
It is our hedge against hypocrisy.