

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Oct 26th 2017

The readings from today do not sit well with me. Much of the language used is not language that I easily associate with God. Thus, it has caused me to pause and to really consider what these readings mean in light of the current signs of our time.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that he has not “come to establish peace... but rather division.” There is a lot in this world that divides us. Some of this division is good – like the division of labor allows people to become experts in fields and harmonious in accomplishing tasks as a community. We are a much better world for having some people who are dedicated to educating our children while others pour their skills into building safe bridges and highways.

But, there is also plenty of division that does not support the building of the community we are called to be. I think of the refugee crisis in Myanmar with the Rohingya people, the divisive political landscape in the United States, and the political strife and violence in Kenya, etc. As I continue to reflect on the division in our world, it is hard for me to imagine that this is how God wants us to live with each other.

In sharp contrast, I think about our annual Interfaith Prayer Service at Creighton University. Each year, a group of students from various faith traditions plan and lead a prayer service that celebrates the diversity of faith in our campus community. They have focused on themes of peace, light, and home. Towards the end of the prayer service, we have a ritual of light. All those gathered eventually all receive a candle with light, which serves as an experience and visual representation of the light that is spread through celebration and unity across difference. As I sit in the space watching the students, who have formed friendships across faith traditions, share these important identities with our community, and spread the light that this work brings about, I cannot help but feel like this is an experience of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. In the face of difference, instead of being divisive, students gather together to grow in greater relationships and understanding.

So, as I pray with this scripture passage about Jesus coming to bring division, rather than peace, I am not sure how to reflect on that in light of our current time. But, I do hold on to the light of hope brought about through work and relationship across division.

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