

## August 24, Proper 21

### Opening Prayer:

God of all the nations,  
whose Son brings peace by the sword of your Word;  
you made covenant with your people,  
your vineyard,  
calling them to live lives that reveal to the world  
your justice and your righteousness.  
Surround us, your Church,  
with so great a cloud of witnesses  
that we would have faith to live our lives  
by your Word alone  
and have the courage to run the race set before us.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
the pioneer and perfecter of our faith,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit is one God,  
now and for ever.

**Jeremiah 1:4-10:** The people of God had strayed far from God's ways until King Josiah removed all objects of foreign worship and guided his people back to God. Jeremiah was part of Josiah's reform movement. In our reading today we hear of Jeremiah's appointment by God to be His spokesman to Israel, despite Jeremiah's objections based on his young age and lack of qualification. If God wants to use you, He will give you what you need no matter your age or perceived lack of qualifications!

he word of the Lord came unto me, saying,  
Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.  
Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.  
But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.  
Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.  
Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.  
See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

**Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13:** This reading claims that the hardships and persecutions that the Christian community was enduring was part of God's disciplining them (as in the word "disciple") and all because God loved them. Well, that notion is quite controversial for some, if not many! We might all agree with where this reading ends up, that God always uses such events, that we can learn from such hardships, and there could even be some healing through it all.

You have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

**Luke 13:10-17:** Through his actions, Jesus showed what life is like in the Kingdom of God. Here, Jesus healed a woman (shocking in that day) without her even asking him (he even called her a "daughter of Abraham" meaning she had equal status with Abraham in the Kingdom! Now contrast that with what people would have thought of her: mental and physical ailments were considered the work of evil, so many would have thought that God had condemned the poor woman. The leader of the synagogue, who objected to Jesus' healing on the Sabbath, showed he is blind to the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound,

lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?  
And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;  
And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:  
Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.  
And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

Do you think that I have come to give peace on the earth? Well, to be honest, yes, we do think you've come to bring peace on the earth. In fact, we expect you to bring peace in spite of our own efforts to the contrary. We expect everything to go just splendidly well when Jesus shows up. We expect world peace, peace in our neighborhoods, peace in our congregations, peace in our homes. And we get all anxious when peace doesn't arrive with rainbows and unicorns, and we start to wonder what went wrong and why isn't Jesus doing something about it.

Our reading from Luke this morning is a piece of Gospel reality from Jesus. It's about our temporal life lived under the cross of Jesus. Jesus has a fire to cast upon the earth. He has a baptism with which He must be baptized, and He is driven to accomplish it.

*The fire Jesus speaks of is Gospel fire. Like the pillar of fire that led Israel through the Sea or the fire of the burning bush that did not burn up, the fire Jesus casts upon the earth is a refining, purifying, illuminating fire that saves.*

*When Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, John was outraged. "You've got to be kidding, Jesus. You've got it all wrong. Upside down and backwards. I should be baptized by you. You're the greater One. You're the One whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie. I shouldn't be baptizing you. This is ridiculous!" But Jesus insisted. He demanded it. "Let it be, John. Let go of your preconceived notions of what I'm about. This is how it goes down. I become the Sinner. It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." His baptism set Jesus on a road to Calvary. It was the washing of the Sacrifice. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And Jesus was compelled to see His baptism through to the end and its fulfillment when He could cry out, "It is finished."*

*There, in that dark death of Jesus, Gospel fire. The burning passion of God to save sinful humanity and a fallen creation. There, in that death, is a peace that the world cannot give, a peace the world does not know, a peace the world cannot broker. It's the peace of sins washed away by the blood of the Lamb, the peace of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting our sins against us, the peace of God's justifying Word that declares us righteous for Jesus' sake alone, the peace of a quiet conscience knowing that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

*That's the baptism into which you are baptized. That's the fire that has come to you with the Word and Spirit. A baptism that drowns and births, that kills and makes alive. A fire that destroys sin and the sinner in Adam and refines the pure gold of the saint in Christ. That "division" of which Jesus speaks not only cuts through families and the closest of our relationships, it also cuts right through each one of us as sinner/saints simultaneously sinful and righteous. Hebrews calls the Word of God a sharp, two-edged sword that can divide soul and spirit, joint and marrow. It's a division that brings unity in Christ, a death that brings life, a drowning that leads to resurrection, a fire that delivers pure gold, a violence that brings peace. Lasting, eternal peace.*

*When the burdens and troubles of life get us down, it is easy to forget who we are: daughters and sons of God. God's actions through the life, cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus show us the extent to which we are loved. But sometimes we can forget that when burdened.*

*The woman in our Gospel Reading is certainly heavily burdened. She was broken and bound, unable to help herself. Defeated and deformed, helpless and hopeless, until Jesus shows up. With Jesus, no matter what binds us, he sets us free and says "Thou art a child of God. It's time to soar!"*

*In the midst of the crowd gathered at the Synagogue, Jesus had eyes for her, he saw her. Others saw her and looked away. The leader of the synagogue was willing to see her 6 days a week, but not on their holy day. Attending to the rules of the Sabbath day mattered more than attending to a hurting child of God.*

*Despite the billions of people on the earth, there is a special place in the heart of God for those who are bowed down and burdened. There is nothing to suggest she saw Jesus. Jesus saw her. There is nothing to suggest she called out to Jesus. He called her. She did not speak to Jesus. But she heard the voice of Jesus.*

*No doubt over the years she had heard many voices. Doctors who said "I'm sorry. There's nothing more I can do for you. Hopefully your family and friends can bring you some comfort." Jesus' voice, though, was different. Jesus' voice is no ordinary voice. His is the Voice of God almighty.*

*Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

### **Concluding Prayers**

Let us pray for Charles, our king, and all the leaders of the nations. Teach us to love and share your gift of peace.

Let us pray for all educators and for their students. Teach us to love and share your gift of mind.

Let us pray for all who care for young, the aged, and all those in any need. Teach us to love and share your gift of life.

Let us pray for Todd, our bishop, and for our ordained and lay leaders in our Parish, as together we proclaim the truth. Do not leave us to merchants of lies.

To the banquet of your kingdom,  
O God of the nations,  
you have invited people of every race and tongue.  
May all who been given a place at your table,  
come also to the unending feast of life.  
Grant this through your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**For our Parish.**

O GOD the Holy Ghost, Sanctifier of the faithful: Sanctify this parish by thine abiding presence. Enlighten the minds of thy people more and more with the light of the everlasting Gospel. Bring erring souls to the knowledge of God our Saviour; and those who are walking in the way of life, keep steadfast unto the end. Give patience to the sick and afflicted, and renew them in body and soul. Guard from forgetfulness of thee those who are strong and prosperous. Increase in us thy manifold gifts of grace, and make us all to be fruitful in good works; O blessed Spirit, whom with the Father and the Son together we worship and glorify, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

**Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:  
And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen*