Sermon: Turned Upside Down – 8-14-16

**Gospel - Luke 12:49-56** - 49 "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! 51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52 From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 53 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." 54 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. 55 And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat"; and it happens. 56 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?

We Pause and Reflect on this Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost on Jesus who comes in unexpected ways to redeem and transform us each day – Breathing in and out the Spirit of those who have gone before us as a great cloud of Witnesses - we take time to reflect...Amen.

When I was a little boy, I used to love to try to stand on my head. I would almost always fall over onto the floor, but I would always get back up off the floor and try again. One day I discovered that if I propped myself against the wall that I could do it much better than out in the open room. But, I could always do it a little bit better with some help from someone – my brother or sister or my mom or dad.
The inside of the house was so different looking when I was standing on my head. The ceiling looked a lot like the floor except for the places where the doors were and the light fixtures sticking out. The couch looked like it was going to fall down at any moment and the curtains stretched upwards as though they were made of something much more rigid than cloth. It was the same room, but it looked entirely different when I was standing on my head.

The outdoors was even better when I was standing on my head. The trees grew down and the houses looked that they were getting ready to fall off the lawn. In a world where trees grow down and curtains stretch upwards anything was possible – when I was a kid.

The words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Luke today must have certainly turned the lives and the worlds of the people/disciples first hearing them upside down. As we hear these words today, they may do the same to us. How often have you ever thought of Jesus as the “Great Divider?” This is not the understanding or term of endearment I have for Jesus, when I think of the descriptive words I have for Jesus, usually I think of loving, gracious, merciful, kind, peaceful, and savior. I don’t think of the “Great Divider” - that idea turns my world upside down and I become uncomfortable and uneasy. My faith gets stretched and I feel a little unbalanced when I hear this text where Jesus is saying: “51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52 From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 53 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."

This doesn’t sound like the Jesus I know or believe in, it sounds like an
uncomfortable Jesus saying that big changes are going to take place because I have
shown up and people are going to react to my teachings, some will believe and some
won’t/// it means change will happen and I don’t like change, especially real
change, because I don’t know what that looks like. If it looks like what Jesus is talking
about – no thanks!

Currently we are living in a world full of division, which is evidenced by the flip of
a switch or the stroke of finger swipe or the click of mouse. People are tweeting and
blogging and Facebooking, Snapchatting, and using all sorts of social media to get their
opinions out there, rarely thinking about what they say before they hit the send key. The
political arena, this election process is the most opinion driven, social media inspired
process ever in modern history. As I have said before, we get so much information in an
instant without time to process and digest it. This means that the information we get isn’t
always true and there are certain websites that have made an “Art Form” out of
“Parody” or lies which seem true but aren’t. It is hard to know what to believe anymore,
what seems like “Sarcasm” to one person seems like the truth to another. Jesus speaks
the truth in our Gospel reading, but this truth is not something we want to hear.

Maybe Jesus should’ve asked the people listening to stand on their heads to
hear what he was saying, it may have made it easier to grasp, – lol. Because that’s
what he was doing. He was turning what they knew of the world upside down. Those
who thought they had things figured out – what it meant to have the messiah come –
the savior of the world – prince of peace – suddenly found everything turned upside
down – or at least sideways.

To those listening for the first time, Jesus teaching just didn’t seem to make
sense, and it doesn’t now. Jesus brings change, change isn’t always welcomed even if
it isn’t good change. Jesus came to do more than throw off the status quo – even
throwing off the status quo is enough of a change because it meant that the routine of
life would be different. Routine certainly can be helpful and it can be harmful at the
same time.

Many times patients come into the psychiatric hospital because their routine has
been thrown off – they stop taking their medication, they stop eating or bathing, they
start to behave erratically – life becomes bizarre. They come to the hospital for
stabilization and treatment. For others, there’s the routine that becomes hum drum and
even a little dangerous. Have you gotten somewhere and don’t remember getting there?
Or eating dinner and forgot what you ate? Forget to take medication or forget what
medication you took? This is dangerous and is like being on Autopilot.

Many times we function in this world as if we are on Autopilot, going through the
motions, without really thinking about what we do or why we do it. Boredom is a part of
autopilot, life can be boring and we just go through the motions with little interest in what
we are doing. Dysfunction can be a part of autopilot also. Individuals and families
function in a certain way, either healthy or unhealthy but remain functionally
dysfunctional until someone decides to make a change which affects the system and
throws it off balanced; like moving out, getting married or divorced, joining a new group or religion, changing jobs, etc. The healthy system can accept the change and remain balanced, the dysfunctional system becomes “unbalanced” and will do anything it can to get the perceived “Problem” child to come back to the system to get it balanced again. Homeostasis is the ability for the system to regain or remain balanced, even if it is dysfunctional.

Jesus stresses the system in our Gospel today, by intentionally saying things that cause the “system” to go off balance. “Things will not remain the same, because I have come into to your world, they cannot – so get used to it – adjust your homeostasis.” So faith means that each day is different of New Possibilities even if we feel somewhat unbalanced. Hope is knowing that there is possibility because in the midst of all of this Jesus is there making a promise, redeeming our lives. His words may seem harsh, and maybe I don’t like a Harsh Jesus, because it throws off my “Homeostasis” and calls me to live in the present but he also points me/us to the future with all of its possibilities.

The Gospels associate Jesus’ ministry with both peace and turmoil. This tension is often hard to relate to in Jesus’ teachings. Jesus calls us to lives of peacemaking, mercy, and justice, which often leads us to face harsh words from others and rejection. We are to discern when our commitment to follow Jesus requires us to take a firm stand and risk everything, even our relationships with the people we love.

In Jesus, peace comes through the mystery of God, who heals all divisions – brings about balance - the homeostasis - to this world in New Way – Jesus comes into this world and turns it upside down and right side up // giving us hope each day! Amen.