

10th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, August 17, 2025

Introduction to the day

The word of God is a refining fire. Jesus is the great divide in human history. He invites our undivided attention and devotion. Today in worship we are surrounded by a great “cloud of witnesses.” In the word and in holy communion we are invited yet again to look to Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW p. 215)

Let us pray.

O God, judge eternal, you love justice and hate oppression, and you call us to share your zeal for truth. Give us courage to take our stand with all victims of bloodshed and greed, and, following your servants and prophets, to look to the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 23:23-29

A reading from Jeremiah.

Because Jeremiah preaches the unpopular message of God’s judgment, he suffers rejection. Today’s reading distinguishes between the true prophet, like Jeremiah, who speaks God’s word, and the false prophet who misleads the people through dreams. One is like wheat; the other like worthless straw.

PSALM: Psalm 82

Arise, O God, and rule the earth. (Ps. 82:8)

SECOND READING: Hebrews 11:29—12:2

A reading from Hebrews.

The author of Hebrews presents us with rich stories of faith. In a long list of biblical heroes, we find examples of trust in God that enabled them to face the trials of life faithfully. In addition to this “cloud of witnesses,” we have Jesus, the perfect model of faithful endurance.

GOSPEL: Luke 12:49-56

Jesus delivers harsh words about the purifying and potentially divisive effects of obedience to God’s call. The way of the cross often leads followers to encounter hostility and rejection, even from those they love.

GOSPEL MESSAGE - It’s So Confusing

Entering someone else’s conversation halfway through can be disorienting. You don’t know the context, and you’re confused about the background, so you can’t really make heads or tails of what’s being discussed. Today’s gospel reading is kind of like that experience. It’s so confusing to hear Jesus talk like this!

But if we’re honest with ourselves, we know our world is already full of the divisions Jesus describes. Political divisions have only deepened. Religious divisions cause people to talk over one another. We encounter racial divisions that we’re afraid to talk about or even acknowledge, and economic divisions that isolate people according to status and means. Yes, our world is already full of divisions. And what

about the tone of this gospel reading? Jesus' sayings are so provocative! With the kind of rhetoric being thrown around in our world today, do we need more alarming words?

When we look closely at the reading and pay attention to the context, we can get a better idea of what exactly Jesus is proposing in these inflammatory sayings. Notice the divisions he mentions here: divisions within families. In the context of the ancient world, the family was the central unit of connection and the source of your identity. The family told you who you were and how you could (or could not) operate.

It is into that kind of ordering, the foundation of identity, that Jesus brings disruption. His point is that in the kingdom of God, whether you were born into wealth or poverty, a family of prestige or one of pandemonium, you are God's beloved child. The message of God in Christ breaks up the social boxes and social games of this world, erasing the dividing lines we already set up for ourselves.

In the death and resurrection of Christ, we're all united in God's family, enjoying a new ordering of identity that breaks down what divides us.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the church, the creation, and the whole people of God, for God is near.

Raise up faithful leaders for your church around the world. Inspire global missionaries with a spirit of accompaniment, as they walk alongside our partners in the gospel in solidarity, interdependence, and mutuality. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Safeguard rivers and lakes from pollution. Sustain the work of conservationists, policy makers, and advocacy groups seeking to protect fresh water sources. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Bridge divisions across partisan lines. Strengthen cooperative efforts among lawmakers who enact policies that protect our neighbors who are most vulnerable. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Embrace all who suffer in isolation: for those who are incarcerated or detained, those who are fleeing from unsafe environments, and those who are sick or homebound especially Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Cassie Jessup, Glenda Panke, Barry Rogers, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. Reassure them of your care in all times and places. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Guide the leaders of this congregation. In these late summer weeks, inspire their planning for a new program year ahead. Kindle in us a spirit of collaboration and support for their work. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

With thanksgiving, we remember the cloud of witnesses who surround us. By the example of their faith, enable us to run with perseverance the race set before us, until that day when we join their unending praise. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Confident in God's presence and promise, we entrust our prayers to the one who always receives them; through Jesus Christ, our wisdom and companion.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.