

Sermon, 17.08.2025 Heb. 11.29-12.2, Luke 12.49-56,

We are here, in this house of God, with our hearts heavy with the knowledge of a world groaning under the weight of conflict and sorrow. Our screens and our minds are filled with images from Ukraine, Palestine, Sudan, and countless other places where peace is a distant dream and suffering is a daily reality. How do we, as people of **faith**, grapple with such immense brokenness? Where do we find hope when the world seems to be tearing itself apart? I would like to title my sermon, as “Faith in a broken world.”

To start with, what is **faith**? Today's Scripture readings give us a deep and thought-provoking take on this question.

The writer of the Hebrews tells us, that “without **faith** it's *impossible* to please God!” (Heb. 11:6) and have we ever wondered whether our faith is enough? **Faith** seemed to be this mysterious substance that some people have lots of, others a bit and some none. According to (Heb. 11:1) ‘**Faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’.

Hebrews 11, that magnificent roll call of faith, reminds us that the journey of **faith** has always been fraught with peril. We hear of people who crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land, a moment of miraculous deliverance from oppression. By **faith**, Abraham offered Issac as a sacrifice. It was by **faith** that the walls of Jerico fell. But then, almost immediately, the narrative shifts to the challenges faced by those who came after: We are reminded of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel – all of whom, through **faith**, “conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire and made strong out of weakness.

Yet the chapter doesn't end here with triumphal victories. It speaks also of those who “were tortured, of others who “suffered mocking and flogging, and even stoned.”

This is not a story of easy **faith**. This is the testament of a **faith** that endures through hardship, a **faith** that trusts in God even when all earthly hope seems lost. These heroes of **faith**, we are told, “received no promises,” yet they pressed on, their eyes fixed on something beyond their immediate circumstances.

And that brings us to Hebrews 12: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking for Jesus the founder and perfecter of our **faith**.”

We are called to run a race, not a leisurely stroll. And we are to run it with endurance, acknowledging that there will be obstacles, setbacks, and pain. But our gaze is to be fixed on **Jesus**.

Now let us bring in Luke (12:49) “**I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!** And it goes on to say: **Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division.**”

**A jarring statement, isn't it?** Especially when we long for peace, when our hearts ache for an end to the violence in Ukraine, killing of innocent children in Palestine, and unrest in so many other places. **Jesus**, the prince of peace, says he came to bring **division**. And then he speaks of discerning the “face of the earth and sky” but failing to “interpret the present time.” (12:56).

What is going on? What is really Jesus saying here? Is he advocating for violence or conflict. Certainly not but rather, he is speaking about the radical nature of the **Kingdom of God**, a kingdom that often stands in direct opposition to the **kingdoms of this world**. His coming, his message, his very presence, forces a choice, ‘**a division**’. It exposes the true nature of hearts, revealing those who cling to power, injustice, and self-interest, and those who are willing to embrace the challenging path of righteousness, love and sacrifice.

The fire Jesus speaks of is the purifying transformative fire of the **Holy Spirit**, the fire that exposes what is false and refines what is true. **And the division?** It is the inevitable consequence of truth confirming falsehood, of light exposing darkness, of justice challenging injustice.

In our troubled world, we see this played out daily. The conflict in Sudan in Palestine, in Ukraine and elsewhere – they are not just geopolitical struggles. They are symptoms of deeper **division: division** between those who seek to dominate and oppress, and those who long for **liberation and dignity**; division between those who cling to ancient grievances and those who yearn for reconciliation; **division** between those who profit from war and those who suffer its devastating consequences.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to interpret the present time. We are called to see beyond the headlines and the soundbites, to discern the spiritual realities at play. And we are called to respond, not with despair but with **faith**.

Just as the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews endured, so too must we. We are called to be people of **enduring faith**, even when the world around us seems to be engulfed in fire. We are called to embody the **peace** of Christ, not the **peace** that avoids conflict with injustice, but a **peace** that actively seeks justice and reconciliation and a **peace** that **passes all understanding**. We are told to pray, to advocate, to stand in solidarity with the suffering, and to work tirelessly for the coming of God's Kingdom, where **justice** rolls down like **waters** and righteousness like an ever-flowing **stream**.

Let us pray: Father, bring peace to our broken world. Heal divisions, and sufferings, and lead leaders towards justice and reconciliation. Amen