

Trinity 9

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace. May I speak in the name of the God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Christians are supposed to be nice, peace-loving people, who do not make a fuss or rub anyone the wrong way. Or so, some might think...

Shockingly though, Jesus in our gospel reading today paints a very different picture:

Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!

Whatever happened to the Prince of Peace? What about Jesus' words about turning the other cheek if someone slaps you?

From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace and Jesus is all about breaking the cycles of endless violence through non-violence. But Jesus is not a fluffy Prince of Peace. Jesus is not for the kind of peace where you have to close your eyes, to not see the devastating cost of a peace without justice for those who simply could no longer withstand the overwhelming might of those set on taking what is not theirs to take. Jesus is the Prince of Peace who calls us to follow in his non-violent footsteps, standing, calling and working for peace with justice.

Peace with justice means that all can be safe in their homes, building lives and communities full of shared food, laughter and love. Peace with justice is a world where all have enough of what they need in terms of shelter, food and safety, rather than an ever-widening chasm between the superrich and the poor, with some having more than they could ever need and others having their human dignity trampled in their desperate fight to survive. Peace with justice is only possible by beating selfishness, greed, prejudice and hatred.

Peace with justice is hard. If we want to follow Jesus as the Prince of Peace, we are called to struggle daily against selfishness, greed, prejudice and hatred, in our own lives and in this world. What Jesus is calling us into is not a fluffy, nice life of peace, where we close our eyes and ears to the destruction and suffering that injustice wreaks in our communities, in our neighbourhoods, in our world. To follow Jesus' call to stand, call and work for peace with justice, is not exactly a recipe for popularity. Standing, calling and working for peace with justice is likely to bring us into confrontation with others, who prefer the comfort of the status quo.

From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided.

Standing, calling and working for peace with justice is to make the possibly unpopular decision in our households to only have meat once or twice a week or go full vegetarian, to live more sustainably so that all of God's creation might flourish. It is to listen when someone alerts us to how our actions or words might be hurtful to someone and might be

coloured by our unconscious bias about ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, disabilities, gender, neuro-diversity or age. It is the courage to ask why some of the employees in our workplace are not paid a real living wage, or why there are people doing the same job, but some are paid less for the same work. Standing, calling and working for peace with justice is to pray that the Holy Spirit may open our eyes, ears and hearts to see, hear and recognise all injustice that hinders peace with justice to become a reality for all. And once the Holy Spirit starts to enable us to see, hear and recognise injustice, we need to pray for the Holy Spirit to grant us the courage to stand, call and work for peace with justice with Jesus Christ. And courage we will need, because Jesus knew what he was talking about when he said:

Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!

Jesus' stand, call and work for peace with justice made the powers that be so afraid and angry that they whipped up the crowds until they were shouting 'Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him!'. God stands with the disempowered, the marginalised and oppressed, challenging selfishness, greed, prejudice and hatred. To stand with the Prince of Peace for peace with justice is not going to bring us some fluffy peace, it is much more likely to bring us discomfort, confrontation and division.

Are we, are you, willing to stand, call and work for peace with justice with Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace?

Amen.