

10<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost Sermon  
August 14, 2022

We are now engaged in a great civil war. At stake are the lives of every person who will ever live. Theologians may argue over how it happened, what is happening, and even what is at stake, but few are able to deny the reality that things are not quite right. The world is in rebellion against the One who created all things.

Scientific circles argue over cause. Some say it is all random, while others say that nature determines these things. First. If it were all random, we should not know it was random, for order would have no meaning. Order does have meaning, so the first principle is shattered. If nature is determinate, then it is like saying that nature has a mind. If nature has a mind, then how is that not like God?

You may think I am being a little too complex about these things, but they are important. Unless we understand the fundamentals which attack Christianity, we can in no way defend our belief other than to say that we believe we were told to believe. Mind you, there is nothing wrong with this when it is true, but in a world of heightened hostility, it is good to have the ability to reason against the prevailing and foul wind that is blowing. Sadly, too many have abandoned the faith for seemingly no other reason than the often childish comments that some make and, unable to counter what is being said, accept the comment as true.

We have been given a great gift. There is before us reality. God created the heavens and the earth. In the order that is in the universe, apparent to any willing to look, one sees that this universe is not random. Scientists will dabble at the edges, but they do not seem to want to humbly admit that they see the order and order is never random. If it were, we should not know it.

The second point is even more important for us. If God made the world, why has it gone so wrong? Few will deny that there are things that are not quite right with the world. There is constant fighting and little cooperation between peoples and nations. Why is that? Did God get it wrong?

As Christians, we take our lessons from what Scripture says. Genesis three tells us that Adam and Eve chose to set up on their own. Of course, such a thing is not possible, but it is what they did and God allowed it. He gave us the ability to think freely. Just because we think a certain way does not make it right. One of the best tests is to ask, "How would you like it if someone did that to you?" For God's purposes, some of which we know, God has created things so that they could become what they are. He gave free will. We may not know all of the reason, but we know that at the very least, from what we are able to fathom, free will is the only thing that allows us to, of our free will, reject the bad and accept the good. Of course, there are those who choose the bad. The better the stuff we are made of the better, or worse, we can go. God must have thought the risk of what He has done to be worth it.

If we read Scripture, we see that God tells us many things, but the thing to note is that there are many if/then propositions. We sometimes think that if we do our part, then God is obligated to do His. You know, "Raise your child in the way they shall go and they will not depart from it." But they do depart. Verses like these are more in the realm of working out our salvation with fear and trembling knowing that God is at work. We do our part and God does His. But know this, just as He never stops you from sinning, so also will He not force another to do what is against their will. This is why Jesus said, "Not my will, but Thine be done." We do have to give up our will for His.

Jesus proclaimed that He had a baptism to undergo. He wanted to get it underway. Just imagine the stress of being the Savior and all of those who are dependent upon Him. We need what only Jesus can provide. He must be the One who leads the way. I do not think we can even begin to fathom what this means. But He willingly did it for our sakes. He has come to give the faithful the peace that surpasses all understanding. He has not come to bring peace to those who continue in rebellion. How could He? One cannot reason with evil.

When everyone on earth becomes Christian, the world will be well. That is not going to happen. Jesus came to save those who believe. "As many as believe, to them He gives the power to become children of God." Nations are not saved.

It is a simple thing. If this life is all that we have, then nations are more important than people. A nation that thrives for a thousand years is more important than a person who lives four score years. But if we are to be resurrected and live with Christ forever, then we are incomparably more important. But there is a separation. There are those who pretend (the goats) and those who are hostile to the faith (the wolves). The sheep know the Master's voice. They listen to Him.

There are many over the ages, when it was useful, who used the name of the church for all kinds of things evil. Many these days believe the church irrelevant. If Jesus is not God in the flesh and we are not raised from the dead, then they are right, But, if Christ is Lord and we have the hope of the resurrection, then they are wrong. Dead wrong.

The world is divided. It was divided with the first children, Cain and Abel. It has been divided ever since. Our Saving Lord has called us to Himself, but there are those who will not heed the call. The most unreasonable thing is to reject the call yourself because another refuses to believe. We love them. In fact the Lord allows us to hate the sin, but we are to love the sinner. The Lord loved us in while yet we were sinners. That is how it begins, but that is not where it stays.

We do know how to interpret the signs of the planet. We pay attention to the weather and understand the patterns. Some can, quite literally, feel it in their bones. If we are able to learn and understand these things, why do we not apply the same energy to learning the signs the Lord gives us? We have become too good at ignoring the signs.

Jesus reminds us that if we do not heed His directs, warnings, and the call He gives for us to follow Him, it will do no good to say we are followers of Christ and then turn our backs on Him. He who knows, understands our hearts. He knows we need a heart transplant; and, he is the donor. He gives us His heart so that we can have a clean heart and a right spirit within us. Jesus is telling us that we do know how to interpret the time where we are. We may not like it – and that is perhaps the core of the problem – but we are able to recognize it.

Our Savior has come to save us. We need saving. He has come to set us on the right course, which includes intentionally seeking to become more and more like Jesus each day.

What is happening around us has been the course of human history. Do not focus upon this world's history, or what happens because we ignore the Lord. Instead, focus upon the great cloud of witnesses who have made possible our faithful walk with Jesus. This building, built one hundred and forty years ago, was built by the blood, sweat, and tears of the faithful who had a vision of You being here, worshiping the Lord. Our faith is not something we have invented, but it has been handed down to us by faithful witnesses who prayed for our salvation. All the faithful of all times and places are among the great cloud of witnesses. Disregard what has gone on before and look to the Lord of our Salvation. He is the sign for all times. Amen.