

## **Are We Hypocrites?**

**Let Us Pray:** Our Father in Heaven, May the words of My mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be for your glory, Jesus, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen

We have such Good News. Our doors are open and no one is coming in. Why? WHAT MESSAGE are people hearing?

The Lessons, the Psalm, and the Gospel that were read, although, written so long ago are still relevant to the world we live in today. They are relevant and very important if they are read and interpreted with discernment. This is true any time that the Bible is read, cited and used to influence people.

Several of the readings refer to the crowd of witnesses. Those are the people who have gone to heaven before us. In these readings they are the ones who remained true to their Faith, perhaps even dying for it. Their experiences show us our baptism can carry a heavy load. They remind us that following Jesus is not easy in this world. It is so much easier to walk on the other side of the street, to sleep in on a Sunday morning, to join in the vitriol of condemning people we don't know or understand.

In the Gospel today, Jesus is setting the stage for the eventual outcome of his ministry and what it means to follow him, a fire of cleansing judgment that spreads the good news and the baptism of his death in order to conquer death. Finally; Jesus warns us that we only want to hear and see what we want to hear and see.

Religion has never united the people of the earth; Not the people in the time of Jesus and not the people through the ages. This is what Jesus was prophesying: He knew the hearts of the people of this earth and their need for power and riches. He knew their need to control the world around them.

This is why the words of Jesus today are so important, "I came to bring fire to the earth.... Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, rather to divide."

Fire in the Bible is often accompanied by judgement. This fire of judgement may be about our inability to save ourselves. When we are exposed to fire (real fire or another horrible disaster in our lives) and feel we have lost everything, that is when many of us turn to God.

Now I must admit, if this was my first Gospel lesson in the church I might turn around and walk right out. Where is the love? I repeat Jesus came here to understand mankind and he really did. He knew that we could not make it on our own and of course we still cannot. We are baptized in the name of God. Jesus died for us on the cross for our sins.

Jesus discusses baptism, one he is very worried about. He does not say it will be easy. His baptism came with a price. He knew his was on a walk to the cross where he would have a second baptism. He would be crucified so that we might have life. We, on the other hand, have a different baptism. A ritual often followed by a celebration with cake, presents and a family party. Hopefully the people who promise to teach that tiny baby the good news becomes a part of that child's life and upholds the promises they made.

In Hebrews the writer reminds us of the faithful cloud of witnesses of our faith that were considered heroes of the Faith. They were not saved from hanging and torture and chains, or persecution because they followed the word of God. They were commended yet did not receive what was promised. God's promise is not on this earth.

Many people walk into a church, that is the easy part. Living a life of discipleship is the hard part. That is what is asked of us. Worship and follow. Blessed are the poor, the meek, the humble and compassionate. Blessed is those who work for, speak out for and make peace in the world. Blessed are you who stand for love and strive for justice. Blessed are you who understand and love cultures different from you. Blessed are you who can forgive, because it is in forgiving that you can be forgiven.

As we teach our littlest children when they ask, "where is God?" What do we say? He is everywhere. He sees everything, and he knows every hair on our heads. We can hide nothing from him. He knows our thoughts before we know them. This is what is explained in Jeremiah. This is how he knows those who are trying to lead his faithful away from the church with false teachings and

using the word of God for their own benefit. God is watching and in Psalm 82 as he speaks to a cloud of witnesses in heaven (angels), God will come back and establish Justice on earth.

As I speak to you, I want to remind you of the love of Jesus foremost. He came to earth to change the earth. To find the lost and forgotten of society. To free the tormented. He did not come to help governments and rich men get richer. He did come for everyone. Books and pictures have been written. They have been made into bibles and paintings. They have been put into museums and hung on walls in homes. People all over the world have different versions of our lord and savior. I want to remind you wars have been fought over what man has decided, the what and who Jesus is. Man has picked books out of scrolls to form their versions of the bible, so that it serves their purposes. Man has picked chapter and verse out of those bibles so that they can control people around them. I want to remind you that the most important thing to remember about Jesus is this.

He loved us, knowing our inhumanity to each other, Knowing that baptism was a burden. Yet he took that last walk and he died on a cross so that our sins were forgiven once for all. Our burden is to show the LOVE that he showed us.  
AMEN