

Season after 
PENTECOST

Prayer

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, by the working of Your Holy Spirit, grant that we may gladly hear Your Word proclaimed among us and follow its directing; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Scripture Readings

Psalms 119:153-160 (antiphon v. 154)

Jeremiah 28:5-9

Romans 7:1-13

Matthew 10:34-42

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 685

Other Hymns – 682 (OT), 579 (E), 661 (G), 753 (G)

O most merciful God, Lord of heaven and earth, as You have commanded and invited us to pray; so hear and answer the petitions we bring before You this day.

Rule and govern Your Church and all her pastors and ministers that she may be preserved in the pure doctrine of Your saving Word, defended against all adversity, and protected from all adversaries, that thereby faith may be strengthened and love increased in us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant health, wisdom and integrity to all in authority over us, especially to the prime minister of Canada, the premier of this province, the parliament and all legislative bodies, and all judges and magistrates. Endow them with Your Spirit and with respect for Your Word, that they would serve Your good pleasure for the maintenance of righteousness and the punishment of wickedness so that we all may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. According to Your gracious will, turn the hearts of our enemies and make them to walk with us in humility and peace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant to those in trouble, want, sickness, anguish of labour, peril of death or any other adversity the healthful Spirit of Your grace for healing, strength, comfort and relief. Bless especially those who suffer for the sake of Your name and Your Word. Hear us on behalf of _____ and those we name in our hearts. Give them courage to stand firm in their afflictions and patience until the day of Your deliverance. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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Preserve us from pestilence and every evil. Give to us favourable weather and cause the fruits of the earth to prosper, that we may enjoy them in due season and offer You praise and thanksgiving for all Your goodness to us. Lend Your blessing to all honourable vocations and honest industry, that we may serve where our skills and abilities may be of good use. Bless the arts and music, that we may please You and be encouraged by all that is good, right, true and beautiful. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Give to all husbands and wives grace to live together in love and faithfulness. Bless the homes and families of Your people, that they may be places where Your name is honoured and love is nurtured. Give Your special grace to the widowed, the orphan, all mothers with child, the aged and the infirm, that we may grant them comfort, aid and protection. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things for which You would have us ask of You, most gracious and merciful God, grant to us for the sake of the bitter sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we are bold to call You Father and in whose name we pray, trusting in Your mercy and confident that You will give answer to our prayers. **Amen.**

Season after **PENTECOST SERMON**

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
(Series A)

Sermon Text: Matthew 10:34-42

“Sorting Out A Domestic Disturbance”

As Jesus debriefs His twelve apostles in today’s Gospel Reading, He warns them about domestic disturbances. Will the Twelve enter homes in turmoil? Yes, but Christ also warns them about their own relatives. As they preach His saving Gospel, a sword of conflict will divide the members of their homes. Those who follow Christ will be cut off from those who do not. To echo the words of the prophet Micah, *“a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”*

But how can this be? How could Jesus and His Good News of free salvation by faith bring about such domestic disturbance? What ever happened to *“Peace on earth, goodwill toward men,”* announced by the angel at His birth? To be sure, Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the One who gives the peace that passes all understanding. But the peace He gives is not peace at any price. Christ gives peace to those whose love for Him outshines love for parents and children. He gives peace to those who take up their crosses to follow Him. He gives peace to those who have lost their lives in this world in heart-felt repentance and faith to gain the peace of eternal life from Him. At the same time, however, peaceful followers of Christ who hear His Word in faith and live according to it, will be in direct conflict with those who do not have this faith, this Word, this Saviour. So the conflict begins. Even conflict between members of the same household.

But we don’t like conflict, do we? We try to avoid a domestic disturbance wherever we can. So, how do we keep peace in the family? Sometimes, the price of peace is too high. To maintain peace, we refuse to take up the cross of Christ – a cross that includes forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven us. Often, it is easier just to keep silent, and pass over those things we need to confess to each other so that forgiveness can be given and received. Facing those family disputes with gentleness, respect, and love so that we can be reconciled to each other is often the cross we need to shoulder and carry. But

do we? For the sake of outward peace, we often love our family members more than our Maker and Redeemer. Sometimes, for the sake of family peace, we break the very First Commandment – loving our family more than God . . . denying His family – the family of faith into which we have been baptised, with God as our true Father. Avoiding domestic disturbances can, as such, lead us to sin. And maintaining outward family peace is a price too high . . . denying our Lord is too high a price to keep peace in the family – which is really no peace at all.

And to forgive us for trying to keep peace in our family without and apart from Him, to give us peace with His own heavenly family; Jesus faced the ultimate domestic disturbance. He was rejected by all in order to give us the right to be called His brothers and sisters . . . children of His heavenly Father. Shortly after He sent out His disciples, our Lord was approached by His earthly relatives, who tried to arrest Him, saying He was out of His mind. Jesus knew firsthand the truth of Micah's prophecy, "*a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*" Those Christ came to save crowded around Him in the Garden of Gethsemane with swords and clubs. His twelve closest followers did not support Him with prayer and encouragement; but instead, deserted Him – one betrayed Him, another denied Him, and all the rest ran away and hid. Yes, Jesus was embroiled in a bitter family conflict.

But the worst was yet to come. Hanging from the cross, Jesus was on the outs with His own Father in heaven. He was abandoned as He hung bleeding and dying. "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" He cries out. But why? Why had His heavenly Father turned against Him? Certainly not because the Father was fickle; after all, at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration the Father spoke those words, "*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" He loved His only Son and that could never change. Why then? Why this cross? Certainly not because the Son had sinned and given His Father any reason to turn away from Him. Why? Because Jesus took upon Himself our sins. His Father turned away from His only Son because He now bore the sins of the entire world. It was our sins that brought on this ultimate domestic dispute. And dying in our place, Jesus suffered hell itself as He was alienated from His Father and from the family of the entire world.

Yet, by dying for us and rising again, Jesus brings about harmony in the family. We are now forgiven, reconciled, and eternally a part of His family – the Holy Christian Church. And it is this Gospel message, this Good News, that is the one and only way to patch things up during any domestic disturbance. We cannot make things right with God the Father, no matter how hard we try; but Jesus has done it all for us. We cannot be fully reconciled to family members and relatives who are cut off from us except by giving and receiving the forgiveness we have from Christ – from His cross and empty tomb.

And do you know what? All who are baptised in His name and marked with His cross are members of His family. With the cup of His blood and the bread of His body, Jesus feeds those at His Table who are united in Him and to Him by faith. And so, there is harmony in the family.

And how do we show that we are united with our fellow Christians in this family of faith? Quite simply, when we serve others. Whether other people see what we do or not, God sees the kind acts we do for others, even if it is only giving a cold glass of juice and a couple of cookies to little ones. For by serving others, we serve Him. By this service, we show that a great reward has been prepared for us by Jesus.

Harmony reigns in the family of faith when we listen to those who preach and teach God's Word to us. Listening, believing and acting on the words preached by the called ministers of Christ is vital to the harmony of His family. After all, hearing them, we hear Jesus Himself speak to us. And hearing the Words of Christ, we hear our heavenly Father speaking to us. And through that hearing, we believe and follow what He says; and so, there is harmony in the family. Amen.