

Sermon for 17 August 2025 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalter Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19(*insert Alternate leader***people**); Hebrews 11:29-12:2; Luke 12:49-56

Sermon:

Fierce talk.

Suitable for our President's crude take-over of power in Washington, D.C. these days.

Pushing us to look squarely at the call to prayer and self-denial our time in church provides us.

This is the place, these are the people, we are given to get ready for change with.

First Isaiah and the passionate mix of tenderness and rage he feels and shows.

Then Hebrews reminding us this is the life of faith: Never finishing, always trusting and building on so many faithful ancestors and friends, insisting this is real life: painful, precious, holding on and seeing the truth in the midst of doubt and trust.

And Jesus is right in the middle of it all. John the Baptist on wheels. "I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already ablaze!"

Like the figures at his resurrection, "People of Israel, why stand you here gazing up into heaven?"

Every time I get depressed or angry about how out of control things are, this side of Jesus comes into my view and I learn a little more about trust and calling. At my age, it's often about whether I'm losing it, and finding out how just plain adaptable and fortunate I am. I mean really, in a country where plenty of dreams came alive, where despite all the abuse and classism from Europe and our own prosperity clouded our vision, America has brought dreams to birth and education to the masses ...

We can dream. We can even teach. We can invent, and demonstrate, and produce, not just for the wealthy, or the white, or the males. We can do wonderful, healing things. We have. Help us go forward in that direction.

The question is, Can we wait? And can we love, as the Master teacher keeps telling us?

If he's angry and impatient in today's version of him, can we take that to heart and see it as a real call for those who can respond? With all our limitations, aren't we hearing that, day by day and prayer by prayer?

This is where the Word comes alive across the room and down among the pews. What do you see? What stirs us as a fellowship to get moving on? Not just what we have done, but what might we do?

Think about it. Pray about it. Holy Jesus, enable us with your harsh talk today and your tender lovingkindness every day and every nighttime, in this warm and crazy summer full of promise and so rocked with tragedy and holding back and not stopping the awful odor of war.

Let us pray.

Thank you, Lord, for calling, just as you called Abram and Sarai, Mary and Joseph, John and Charles, and all of our immediate predecessors here in this church. Walk beside us. Bend our hearts towards the blessings and hopes that stand just outside our unlocked door. We are ready, Lord, even as we shudder and say "Not yet." We are your people. Come, collect, connect, collect and reveal to us the next steps you want us to take, individually and together, Love us, and let us love you and all around us. Amen.