9th Sunday of Luke

Gospel Reading Reflection for Luke 12:16-21 from 2025 available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XRmCIoCL2M

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:14-22

Brethren, Christ is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

- ***Christ is our peace, who has made us both one***

"Peace" in Christian worship and theology:

John 14: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you."

John 20:19: "Peace be with you!"

Divine Liturgy:

In peace, let us pray to the Lord

For the peace from above and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord

For the peace of the whole world, the stability of the holy Churches of the God and the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

What is "peace?"

Absence of war

Inner tranquility

"Shalom" in the Old Testament

Peace means more like "well-being" in every sense.

Psalm 122:6-9: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

"May they prosper who love you!
7 Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers!"
8 For my brethren and companions' sake
I will say, "Peace be within you!"

9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.

Peace is a gift from God…

Psalm 85:8-9: Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his saints, to those who turn to him in their hearts.[a]
9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.

Peace will come only at the end times, ie, with the Messiah:

Zechariah 9:9-10:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass,
on a colt the foal of an ass.
10 I will cut off the chariot from E′phraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Romans 5:1: Peace with God: "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we[c] rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God."

Romans 14:15-17: Peace with all people: "If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. **16** So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. **17** For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit…"

- ***and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility***

The meaning of this phrase is debated, but each possible interpretation sheds light on how Christ has saved us.

- The first possible interpretation argues that the "dividing wall" is a literal wall in the Jerusalem Temple that kept Gentiles out of the Temple precincts, because their presence would pollute the sacred space. This literal stone wall separated Jews and Gentiles. In Jesus Christ, however, all people can enjoy the blessings of God together – the Jew first and also the Greek, so the dividing wall has been removed.
    - Josephus describes this: *Jewish War*, 5.5.2: "There was also a wall of partition, about a cubit in height, made of fine stones, and so as to be grateful to the sight; this encompassed the holy house and the altar, and kept the people that were on the outside off from the priests."



    - "No stranger is to enter within the balustrade round the temple and enclosure. Whoever is caught will be himself responsible for his ensuing death."

    - τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ
        - No one calls the wall by this name
        - Would Gentiles in Ephesus know what he was talking about?
        - Some say, therefore, that the ACTUAL wall between Jews and Gentiles isn't meant, but a metaphorical wall that had separated Jews and Gentiles.
- A second reading argues that the dividing wall is not a literal one that separates Jews and Gentiles, but a figurative wall that separates heaven and earth, dividing us from God. In Jesus Christ, however, God has become man, and so heaven and earth are unified once more.

- A final interpretation argues that the dividing wall does not separate two types of people (Jews and Gentiles), nor two types of existence (heavenly and earthly). It separates human beings from the life they were meant to live and creates an internal confusion and division in every human soul. We are, before Christ, divided because our body goes in one direction, and our soul goes in another. In Christ, who took on a body, human nature is guided to live in a way that connects the soul and body into a single person again.
- Each of these interpretations sheds light on what Christ has done to save us. In the sin of Adam, we were separated from God, and do not know why we are here or the meaning of our lives. We were separated from each other, and live in constant strife with our neighbors. And we were separated within ourselves, and do not know why our feet speed toward evil. In Jesus Christ, however, these dividing walls of hostility have been torn down, so that we are united to God, united to our neighbors and united within ourselves.

- ***and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end***

2 Cor 5:16-21 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. [17] So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! [18] All this is from God, who **reconciled** us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. [20] So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be **reconciled** to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The Letter to Philemon

- ***for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father***

Dodd, Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, page 195: "At every point the unity of Father and Son is reproduced in the unity of Christ and believers."

The Father and Son:

One
"in" the Father, the Father "in" the Son
works
shared life
love

John 10:30: "I and the Father are one."

WORKS:

John 10:37-38: "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; [38] but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

John 14:8-11: "Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves."

John 5:17, 19: But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working still, and I am working"…Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.

SHARED LIFE:

John 6:57: As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.

John 5:26: For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

LOVE:
John 5:20: For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel.

John 3:35: the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.

John 14:31: but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Dodd, page 195: "At every point the unity of Father and Son is reproduced in the unity of Christ and believers."

John 14:12-15, 19-20, 23-24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments... Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you… Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

John 6:56-57: He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.

John 15:4, 7, 9: Abide in me, and I in you

…abide in me, and my words abide in you

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.

John 15:12: love one another as I have loved you

- ***So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens (***συμπολῖται***) with the saints and members of the household of Go***

St. Paul, *Philippians* 3:20-21: But our citizenship (***politeuma***) is in heaven (***en ouranois***), and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Life of Anthony*, 14** And thus it happened in the end that cells arose even in the mountains, and the desert was made a city (epolisthe***) by monks, who came forth from their own people , and enrolled themselves for the citizenship in the heavens (***en tois ouranois politeian***).

But, if we are "citizens" of heaven then we are NOT citizens on earth…

Aristotle and the City of Athens
From these things therefore it is clear that the city (***polis***) is a ***natural*** growth, and that man is by ***nature*** a political animal (***politikon zôon***) Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a

political animal = **city** animal

Strabo (63 BC – 23 AD) *Geography*, 13.1.25)
Plato conjectures, however, that after the time of the floods three kinds of civilization were formed: the first, that on the mountain-tops, which was simple and wild, when men were in fear of the waters which still deeply covered the plains; the second, that on the foot-hills, when men were now gradually taking courage because the plains were beginning to be relieved of the waters; and the third, that in the plains. One might speak equally of a fourth and fifth, or even more, but last of all that on the sea-coast and in the islands, when men had been finally released from all such fear; for the greater or less courage they took in approaching the sea would indicate several different stages of civilisation and manners….(See further, Plato, *Laws* 677-82)

Diogenes of Sinope (from Diogenes Laertius, 6.72): The only true commonwealth (***monên orthên politeian***) was, he said, that which is as wide as the universe.

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS, 5 (Anonymous apologetic text from ca.130 AD)

…**For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity…but they inhabit both Greek and barbarian cities, depending on the lot of each of them. And yet, even while wearing the same clothes, eating the same food and conducting themselves in every other way just like their neighbors, they display to us their wonderful and shocking way of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as visitors. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if strangers. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of foreigners.** They marry, as do all others; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. (2 Corinthians 10:3) They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. (Philippians 3:20) They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all men. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. (2 Corinthians 6:9) They are poor, yet make many rich; (2 Corinthians 6:10) they lack all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and they bless; (1 Corinthians 4:12) they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. To sum up all in one word — what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world…The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tabernacle; and Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens.