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Living faithfully in a divided world

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KEY VERSE

“Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:28)

READINGS

Ezekiel 47:1–12; Psalm 103; Galatians 5:1–12; Luke 21:20–28

21 Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

We live in a world that is increasingly divided - socially, politically, religiously, and economically. The noise of conflict often drowns the voice of faith. And yet, in such times, God calls His people not to retreat but to live faithfully and courageously, anchored in His promises and committed to His mission. Today’s lectionary readings challenge us to embody hope, healing, liberty, and endurance even in times of deep division and despair. Through the flowing river of Ezekiel, the renewing mercy of Psalm 103, the call to freedom in Galatians, and Jesus’ apocalyptic warnings in Luke, we are invited to live with purpose and faithfulness.

A River That Brings Healing (Ezekiel 47:1-12)

In Ezekiel’s vision, the prophet is led to a river flowing from the temple, giving life wherever it flows. It transforms barren land into fruitful fields and salty waters into fresh ones. This beautiful image shows that the presence of God brings restoration to everything it touches. In a world divided by hate, injustice, and despair, the Church is called to be this river. We must allow God’s Spirit to flow through us, bringing healing in our families, our communities, and our nation. Just as the river grew deeper as it moved further from the temple, our faith must deepen as we engage more with a hurting world. We cannot merely speak peace from within the walls of our sanctuaries. We must be streams of living water, bringing nourishment and life to a parched and broken world.

Consider how Mother Teresa served in a divided and suffering India, bringing hope through small acts of love. She let God’s river flow through her, transforming lives. Let us ask ourselves: Are we healing agents in our community?

Bless the Lord, O My Soul: Living with Gratitude and Mercy (Psalm 103)

Psalm 103 reminds us of God’s compassionate and gracious nature. He forgives, heals, redeems, crowns, and satisfies. In the face of division, the people of God are called to remember and imitate the character of God. While the world may reward vengeance and bitterness, we are taught to bless, forgive, and love. Faithful living in a divided world requires remembering God’s benefits and living a life that reflects His mercy.

A young Christian man who lost his family in violence forgave his enemies publicly. When asked why, he quoted Psalm 103 and said, “God has forgiven me much; how can I not forgive others?”

That is the kind of radical mercy that heals divisions. Gratitude is the posture that helps us transcend divisions. Instead of always seeing what is wrong, let us learn to bless God, count His benefits, and share His goodness with others.

For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free (Galatians 5:1-12)

Paul reminds the Galatians that their faith must not be corrupted by legalism or false teaching. True freedom in Christ is not about license or empty rituals but about love, truth, and living in the Spirit. In a divided world, ideological bondage is common. People are enslaved by nationalism, consumerism, tribalism, and even religious extremism. As believers, we must stand firm in the freedom Christ gives – freedom that leads to righteousness, peace, and justice. We are to be known not by circumcision or any external marker, but by a faith that expresses itself through love (v.6). That is the hallmark of faithful Christian living.

Think of how Martin Luther King Jr. used his Christian faith to challenge racial segregation. He resisted the legalistic systems that divided people and instead preached a gospel of love and freedom. His life was a testimony to Galatians 5:1. We must ask ourselves: Are we truly living as free people, or are we bound by the prejudices and fears of our divided age?

Lift Up Your Heads: Living with Readiness and Hope (Luke 21:20-28)

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus speaks of distressing times - wars, famines, persecutions, and cosmic signs. But in the midst of this, He gives His disciples a hopeful word: “Stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” This is not a call to panic or apathy but to readiness. Christ calls us to be alert, faithful, and hopeful. To live faithfully in a divided world is to trust that God is in control, even when everything seems chaotic. Readiness means we do not compromise our integrity. We speak the truth, even when it is unpopular. We live with humility, even when pride is the easier road. We keep our eyes on Christ, our coming King.

A missionary serving in a war-torn region once said, “We know Christ is coming, so we serve with urgency and joy.” That is the kind of readiness God expects.

Conclusion

To live faithfully in a divided world is to be a healing river (Ezekiel), a grateful soul (Psalm), a free believer (Galatians), and a hopeful disciple (Luke). It is not a passive calling but an active mission. As the Church of North India and as individual Christians, let us not conform to the divisions of this world but be transformed by the power of the gospel. Let us be agents of unity, justice, mercy, and hope. The world is watching. Will we live faithfully?

Prayer

Gracious God, In a world torn apart by fear, hatred, and division, we come to You seeking courage and faith. Fill us with the healing water of Your Spirit, that we may bring life where there is death. Teach us to bless You at all times and reflect Your mercy to others. Keep us steadfast in the freedom that Christ has won, and help us to resist all forms of bondage. Make us ready, O Lord, to lift our heads and live in the hope of Your return. May our lives be a testimony of faithfulness in a fractured world. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.