Sermon: **‘Do you suppose I came to bring peace to the world? No, not peace, but division.’** (Luke 12.51)

These words are quite terrifying. That Luke (& Matthew) record them is a sort of proof that Jesus said these or similar words. They seem to encourage divisiveness and aggression in church life.

They echo Micah 7.6: **In these times sons treat their fathers like fools, daughters oppose their mothers, and young women quarrel with their mothers-in-law; a man’s enemies are the members of his own family.**

Note also in the novel 1984 children betray parents and are applauded for it.

What can we make of this?

[1] What kind of peace is Jesus not challenging?

Matthew 11.28: **Come to me, all of you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

After the resurrection Jesus says, **‘Peace be with you’** (Luke 24.36, Matthew 28.9, John 20.19, 21, 26)

Mark 9.50: **‘… live in peace with one another.’**

Luke 2.14**: ‘…and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased’.**

John 14.27**: ‘Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does.’**

The lack of peace in TEXT is not that between God and humanity; it is the effect the Messiah’s coming has, dividing folk by their response to him. This creates new bonds, a new family. Often true in society.

[2] Who is *our* new family?

Passages like 1 John 4.19 (**If someone says he loves God, but hates his brother, he is a liar)** and James’ talk of proving faith by loving brothers/sisters (James 2.14-16) = the new family of the people of God in Christ.

Does it mean we ignore our natural families, esp if not part of church, as Jesus seemed to do, (Luke 8.19-21) – though note that Mary and James became followers after the resurrection, or is it more not letting the natural ties prevent a response to God’s call? (Luke 9.57-62)

[3] Tension within the church

Jesus brings challenges, and at times evokes opposition even in the church. So with discernment process.

However too often we use differences to divide, to crush, not to grow.

Differences of opinion are not enemies, but agents of development. But only if love is present.

So Jesus’ words are not a licence to be divisive, after all 1 Corinthians 13.5: **love does not insist on its own way**.

As in the Simon and Garfunkel song Jesus is like a Bridge over Troubled Water.