

8-28-22 Communion Sunday

Sermon- Casting Fire?

Scripture- Luke 12: 49-59, CTW Ps 80: 1-2, 8-19

Hymns- 629, 687, 91

Theme- Jesus says in this passage that he came to bring division on the earth. Then He goes on to describe that division in the households of believers. Have you experienced this? Think of how we naturally despise division in our families. How should we deal with this?

"I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!" (Luke 12:49 NJB) What a powerful and frightening statement! For those gathered around Jesus it was a very disturbing. Why would it be disturbing? What do these words mean to you?

I. What do you think of when Jesus talks of fire like He does in this passage? Why would He wish the earth to be a blaze? Does He mean an actual burning up of the earth?

A. To the people of this time, fire would almost always be viewed as the symbol of judgment. In their eyes they felt Jesus regarded the coming of his kingdom as a time of judgment.

The Jews firmly believed that God would judge other nations by one standard and themselves by another and that the very fact that a man was a Jew would be enough to absolve him.

However, was Jesus really talking about end times or was he referring to another kind of "fire"? Maybe he was referring to the fire of the Holy Spirit...

You see for all the judgment and wrath that He did talk of, his true message was to bring about a fire in the hearts of men for God.

B. Instead of calling down fire from Heaven to destroy us, Jesus is referring to calling down a fire from Heaven to cleanse our souls, to free us from the bonds and wages of our wrong doings. It is also the fire that starts within each of us, that makes us want to spread the Message of the Gospel to others.

Each of us carries the spark of that Fire upon our hearts. We are called by God to pass the igniter of that spark on to others. That igniter is the **hope we receive in Christ.**

As Peter tells us in 1 Pet. 3:15, we are always to be ready to give others the reason for the hope we have, and that hope is Christ and Him crucified.

Think about examples of this in your own families. Christ is saying "never give up, never give in!"

So in a sense Jesus does want the whole world consumed by fire. He wants it to be consumed in our awakening to the call from the Holy Spirit. He wants us to spread His message to all.

C. Why? So that everybody in the world will not have to experience the fire of the final judgment. Jesus tells us these things to give us a sense of urgency in the manners of the spirit.

He has given us all new birth into a living hope. **1 Pet. 1:3**

He also tells us as we take up this cause it will not be easy for those around us. Listen to the words of **Luke 12:51-53...**

"Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." (Luke 12:51-53 NIV)

Jesus tells the crowd that they are wrong if they think He had come to bring peace to their families and lives. In fact, finding Christ in your life can often times have the opposite effect upon a family.

There is a movie called Kingdom Come and in that movie, the matriarch of this strangely dysfunctional family is speaking to the pastor as they go over her plans for her husband's funeral. The pastor is explaining how he has observed her husband's good deeds during his time in the community. However the matriarch explains to him that that is because the pastor did not really know her husband until he was "old and sick". In other words, the husband had no idea what he was doing at the time.

She tells the pastor of a time when she attended a church revival, and was over come by the Holy Spirit. She said that she got saved that night and she was so happy.

She came home and told her husband that he needed to go down to that revival and get his soul saved as well. The husband would not hear of it, in fact he forbid her from ever going to another revival.

He was very angry with her for **giving God control of her life.**

The point is that often times when we have taken Christ into our lives and are filled with the Spirit, we are transformed in such a way that people are unable to recognize who we are any more.

For loved ones this can be hard because they already have a set image of who this person is, and how that person fits into the family situation...and this "new" person is just not acceptable.

Sometimes the fear from the other family members is that this person will try to "change" them. Or they will want to point out the flaws in the life they have. As a result, they may even attempt to return that person to the life they previously had.

II. This is why Jesus said, I have come to bring division.

A. The Word of God is about the sharing of the truth, it is not about making a compromise in what He has said so that we all can get along. However these divisions and splits can be only temporary, they often lead many to find the life they were so avidly against. Where the division between son and father may have appeared irreparable, a new relationship maybe knitted together.

For example, I once knew a couple who had had a very rough marriage in their early years. Both were very young and they were rushed into marriage after one day learning that they were expecting a baby in about 7 months.

They made many of the mistakes that young couples make in their lives. Being so young and so inexperienced and obviously not ready for the responsibilities that go along with being married and having children, their marriage was anything but blissful.

At one point when the child was ten, the parents even separated for awhile, however they did get back together.

Then when the child was in Junior High the wife started going back to church for the first time since the early 1970's.

There was a new pastor at their church. This was his first appointment. She came to hear him preach and was filled with the Holy Spirit through his passion for the Lord.

Of course the husband was not much of a church going person and did not have much use for people who were. While he never really did not say so, he was not very happy with his wife's conversion. This created new strains on a marriage that was none too stable anyways.

However, over the next several years, the husband would attend church every once in a while. In fact, in the last year of his life he went to church a couple of times that summer.

As they both grew closer to God, their marriage began to gain the peace it had not had in the previous 22 years.

At the end of the summer the husband was killed in a farming accident, and his wife was actually at peace that in his death he had taken with him the peace that Christ had given him.

B. God used those struggles and victories as way to prepare her spirit for the days following the tragic death of her husband.

It also allowed her faith to be strengthened, so that as her sons wallowed and foundered in their own grief at the loss of their father, she would continue to pray that both of them would one day be able to forgive God and themselves.

She consistently prayed that one day they would recover the faith they lost when their father was killed.

In those next few years as her faith strengthened, the son's faith faltered. They both lost all hope in God; they both had become so angry at God that they blamed him for everything that was wrong in their lives.

For one brother it was through alcohol and drugs and other activities. For the other it was through a hopeless life, and a bad first marriage. Long story short is that both now are once again serving the Lord.

We all need to understand that the ups and downs are exactly in God's plans as to how He molds us...don't be surprised when you see it happen in your own families...see strength in it, NOT WEAKNESS! GOD IS WITH US ALWAYS!

Hebrews chapter 11 verses 39-40 says: These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. **(Hebrews 11:39-40 NIV)**

What Paul and Jesus were trying to point out to us is that with faith in Christ comes struggle. Even the faithful ancestors of the Jews had to struggle in their lives. None of them went through life without some kind of obstacle to overcome.

They remind us that they carried the fire of the Holy Spirit with them. Even when life seemed hopeless, the Spirit was with them.

Paul tells us: "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." Also, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." **(Romans 12:11-12 NIV)**

C. When we are under the affliction of conflict this is when we should be most vigilant in our prayers. It is at this time when the Holy Spirit is at work in our midst. The answer to prayer is at hand, and it becomes a life changing soul altering moment. Which, can bring about the fire of the Spirit in yet another believer.

With each new believer the fire spreads a little further around the world. More people come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior each and every day.

III. Always Be Looking At God's Track Record For Inspiration in your Own Lives!

A. Just think about it this way. In 30 A.D. there were roughly 511 people who believed that Jesus son of Joseph of Nazareth was the Messiah. Among those who did not believe him to be the Messiah included his brothers James and Jude. However by 60 A.D., more than 15,000 people from Judea to Rome believed Him to be the Messiah, including His brother James who would die for His beliefs at the hands of the Sanhedrin.

B. By the middle of the Second Century A.D., a little over a hundred years after the death of Jesus, His followers had spread from the British Isles to the steppes of Russia, to port of Carthage, the jungles of India, and the

Kingdom of Ethiopia. Furthermore, it had gone from being just a back water Jewish cult to being considered a threat to the Roman Empire. **And yet the fire continued to spread.**

C. By the 4th Century AD, in 312 AD Christianity became the religion of the entire Roman known world. Followers of Christ now ranged from all the way into remains of the Persian Empire, even some ventured into Tibet all in the name of carrying the flame further. All this was in the relatively short span of 300 years.

Now we are near to seeing Christ's prophecy fulfilled as the Gospel is being received worldwide. Each day new peoples hear the Word for the first time in their language. Each day a new heart is opened to the Holy Spirit.

But each day we see more problems, more loses, more attacks on a worldwide church that gets more fragmented every day.

So, are you ready to just throw in the towel and give up?

My challenge to each of us here as we come to the table Christ has set for us is to heed Paul's words about not quenching the Spirit. Understand that God is still in charge and has great things in your future!

Let it lead you to where you can bring another person to know the fire of the God, the truth of His Son and the incredible possibilities through the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

God calls us to never stop hoping, never stop believing, and to never stop following through for the kingdom!

Amen? Let us prepare to come to His table.