

Luke 12:49-56

- 49 “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!
- 50 I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!
- 51 Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!
- 52 From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three;
- 53 they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”
- 54 He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, ‘It is going to rain’; and so it happens.
- 55 And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat’; and it happens.
- 56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

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- Pastor Eric J Thompson writes:
“This particular section can be looked at as having three different parts. The first is a quick summary of his ministry and its eventual end; a fire of cleansing judgment that spreads the good news and the baptism of his death in order to conquer death. Following this is a discussion of the effects the gospel might have on anyone who follows him, and finally, a warning from Jesus about our willingness to hear and see only what we want to.
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- 49 “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!
- 50 I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!

- What do you suppose was the “fire” Jesus came to bring to earth?
 - > Is it our own inability to save ourselves?
 - > A passionate relationship between God and God’s people?
 - > The tongues of fire in Pentecost?
 - > The fire of judgment?
 - > The fires of purification and cleansing?
 - > Hellfire and damnation?
 - > A transformation of faith, practice, and life itself which would spread as a wildfire?
- Was this fire meant to wipe away the smug expectation that “religiosity” would bring salvation?
- Jesus has a longing to fulfill his purpose and understands the terrors it will demand.
- What do you suppose will “kindle” this fire?
 - > The Crucifixion?
 - > The Resurrection?
 - > The Ascension?
 - > Pentecost?
 - > The Great Commission?
 - > Other?
- We don’t usually think of Jesus being “under stress,” although we certainly know that he was. What is this “baptism” which is stressing him out so much that he actually cries out like this?
- We should remember that OUR baptisms are only a joy because of Christ’s willingness to go to the cross!
- Ellicott writes, “He was, in that perfect humanity of His, harassed and oppressed, as other sufferers have been, by the thought of what was coming, more than by the actual suffering when it came.”

51 *Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!*

- How in the world is this “good news” to those of us living in a divided and divisive time?
- Why is Christ, the great Peace-maker, promising, not peace, but division?
- We know, historically, that early Christianity brought great strife into families and communities. Many were disowned, dispossessed, or banished because of their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Is Jesus basically saying that you have to break some eggs to make mayonnaise?
- Luke is softer than Matthew 10:34, and uses the Greek word for “discord” rather than the very concrete and war-like “sword.”
- Peace is an eventual and inevitable promise that Jesus offers, and there truly IS peace for the true believer, but there will yet be civil, relational, and personal strife in this earthly walk.
- The Working Preacher writes, “*Whether it be to attend church, go to seminary, engage in social justice issues, etc. the gospel’s effects can create division.*”
- Are our divisions the problem, or is it how we handle those divisions?

52 *From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three;*

53 *they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.*”

- Are these types of divisions usually based on deep theological concerns and yearnings, or on our relentless desire to control and prevail?

- As noted in the previous verses, there were probably already many families who were divided in this manner!
- The numbers don’t match (six vs. five.) Actually this is not a mistake since they are not all technically in the same household.

54 *He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, ‘It is going to rain’; and so it happens.*

55 *And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat’; and it happens.*

- “*You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.*” ~ Bob Dylan
- This reminds me of the old “Indian Weather Stick.”
- We take better care of our faces and our hair than we do our bodies. We take better care of our bodies than we do of our souls.

56 *You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?*

- Lutheran Seminary Professor Matt Skinner asks here, “*How worried should we be?*” How would you respond to him?
- Hey! I’m not the hypocrite—YOU’RE the hypocrite!
- A man once professed that he believed in God, but didn’t attend church because of all the hypocrites. The pastor replied to him that he was yet welcome, “...because there’s always room for one more!”
- We are always so much better at discerning the truth when it does not involve us.
- Any truth we don’t wish to internalize does not typically register as the truth!
- The “signs of the times” should lead us to repentance and vigilance.