**Not Peace But Division**

Luke 12:49-59

Key Verse 51

 “Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.”

**Introduction**

 In the previous lesson, Jesus teaches his people how to prepare for His 2nd coming. When Christ comes, he rewards or punishes each and every person without missing one, both among the living and the dead. In today’s passage Jesus warns us to fight the good fight in our daily spiritual battle and prompts us to reconcile with God before it’s too late. Let’s listen to Jesus’ teachings and maintain the right perspective even though we live in a confused generation.

1. Read verses 49-50. In what respect did Jesus come to bring fire on the earth? What is the meaning of the expression “a baptism to undergo”? What can we learn from Jesus who was under constraint until the time of completion?

1-1, Read verses 49-50.

“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! **50** But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!

1-2, In what respect did Jesus come to bring fire on the earth?

 ***“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!***

* First of all, Jesus is the King of peace. He came to the world to give peace to men and glory to God.
* Before Jesus’ coming, men were servants of Satan and sin.
* Satan uses men to oppose Christ and the Holy Spirit.
* The peace of Christ does not come from compromise to gain mutual benefit.
* The peace of Christ comes from God. The peace of Christ is gained through a struggle and victory over Satan.

Romans 5:1-2a reads,

 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”

Hebrews 13:20-21 reads,

 “Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, **21** equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

* We prayed that the Northern California wildfire, a destructive forest fire may be quickly subsided. The Rocky Fire has already burned nearly 70,000 acres, displacing 13,000 people from their homes. Governor Brown declared a [state of emergency](http://gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=19053) last week. "California's severe drought and extreme weather have turned much of the state into a tinderbox,"
* Why does Jesus say that he wants to bring fire on the earth out of clear blue?



* It’s an atypical expression of Jesus.

***“and how I wish it were already kindled!”***

* Why does Jesus say, “How I wish it were already kindled?”
* It sounds as if Jesus were an arsonist in a peaceful society (?)
* But this is not true. His desire is to bring true peace by disturbing people’s sense of false peace.

***Jesus came to bring fire, and he wished that it were already started!***

* Jesus also says in verse 35,

 “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning”

* Jesus commands us to “keep our lamps burning.”
* Even the smallest flame can start a wildfire.
* What kind of fire was Jesus talking about?
* It may be that the **fire** Jesus spoke of was judgment coming upon the Jewish people in the following decades.
* “In Jewish thought fire is almost always the symbol of judgment. So, then, Jesus regarded the coming of his kingdom as a time of judgment.” (Barclay)

* It may be that the **fire** Jesus spoke of is the power(FIRE) of the Holy Spirit that could only come after He had accomplished His work on the cross.

Luke 3:16-17 reads,

 John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

* It may also be that the **fire** Jesus spoke of is the spread of the good news and the coming expansion of the work of His kingdom across the globe, which could not happen until He had accomplished His work on the cross.
* So Jesus helped them understand their mission in terms of his world salvation purpose. They would suffer, but he would suffer much more, and the world itself would be divided painfully on the basis of the gospel.

 ***I came to bring fire on the earth.***

* It challenges each of us to follow his footstep to bring fire on the earth wherever we go.
* Also it may mean the fire refining our individual faith.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 reads,

 **“**If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, **13** their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. **14** If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. **15** If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

* We do not know what Jesus’ word, “fire” means exactly. It may be the Holy Spirit, His Judgement, or trial to refine our faith.
* However in the flow of the context, the fire of the Holy Spirit may be well fit in the connection of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection to complete the holy work of the Son of God.

John 16:7-11 reads,

 “But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **8** When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** about sin, because people do not believe in me; **10** about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11** and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”

* The fire of the Holy Spirit does the work of judgement. The fire of the Holy Spirit comes from heaven to the earth to purge men’s sins.

1-3, What does it mean by “a baptism to undergo”?

* Here Jesus longed for the Spirit to begin his purging work on earth.
* But before that could happen, Jesus had to undergo the baptism of his death for our sins and to rise again.
* Only then could the Holy Spirit come and dwell in the hearts of forgiven sinners.
* The fact that Jesus spoke of His suffering as a baptism is meaningful. He wasn’t sprinkled with suffering; He was immersed in agony.
* In the same way, we are to baptized into Jesus Christ and baptized with the Holy Spirit, immersed and overflowing.

1-4, What can we learn from Jesus who was under constraint until the time of completion?

 ***and what constraint I am under until it is completed!***

* How distressed I am till it is accomplished! Jesus was distressed until His work on the cross was accomplished because He knew all the good that would come of it.

Hebrew 12:1-3 reads,

 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

* But once he completes the will of God on the cross, he is no longer poor Jesus but He will be King and Judge over all.
1. Read verses 51 - 53. Why did Jesus’ coming result in division among family? Have you ever experienced such division within your family or among your friends?

2-1, Read verses 51-53.

**51** Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. **52** From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, 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 daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

2-2, Why did Jesus’ coming result in division among family?

***“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.”***

* Again Jesus is the prince of peace, but there is another sense in which he does not bring peace but division even within the family. It’s inevitable!
* Where there is the work of the Holy Spirit, there is the work of Satan.
* Those who are afraid of this division cannot be called faithful servants.
* The word, “divided” or “division” are repeated three times, and “against” up to 9 times.

 ***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.”***

* A mother might accuse a son or daughter, ‘You love Jesus more than me!’ In this way, faith in Jesus can be the reason for family division.
* But when we stand firm, glorify God, such families have often been brought back together in God.
* So the truth is that this kind of division may be temporary.
* Again Jesus came to bring fire and he came to bring division.
* When that happened, the world would be divided into two: those who received Jesus and those who rejected Jesus.
* This division would cut through family ties. Jesus’ people will be alienated from beloved family members.
* Jesus wanted his disciples to realize that gospel ministry would be a fierce and painful spiritual battle before they would see the final victory.
* They needed to prepare their minds for this and not be surprised when painful struggles came upon them.

2-3, Have you ever experienced such division within your family or among your friends?

* Personal application!
1. Read verse 54 - 56. How did people predict the weather? (54-55) Why did Jesus call people hypocrites? (56) How can we interpret this present time? Why is it critical for us to do so?

3-1, Read verse 54-56.

He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. **55** And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is.**56** Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?

3-2, How did people predict the weather? (54-55)

 ***He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. 55 And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is.***

* Finally Jesus made this statement to the crowd.
* Jesus saw through their facade and exposed what was really going on in their hearts and lives.
* They blindly followed the leadership of the religious leaders without discernment.
* Even though there were many signs that Jesus is the Christ, many were ignorant and indifferent. They remained this way in order to avoid making a decision.

3-3, Why did he call people hypocrites? (56)

**56** Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?

* These people already knew what was right and wrong.
* They witnessed all kinds of evil practices; violence, adultery, and idolatry.
* But they pretended not to see.
* They never rebuked young and growing people because of their powerlessness due to their own sins.
* The did not want to hurt others. They were humanistic rather than Biblical.
* They were very permissive of their children’s sinful lives.
* Likewise we see the same things happening in our times.
* There was the case of a handsome and typical 19 year old teenage boy. (CNN on 8-3-15)
* One day, he was lonely and visited an internet dating site, through which he met a girl who said that she was 17 years old. They met and had sex - a one night stand. But later it turned out that the girl had lied about her age. She was in fact, not 17, but just 14 years old.
* He was imprisoned for 90 days, with 5 year probation, and his name was placed on a sex offender registry for the next 25 years. What shame he had to carry for so long!
* His parents disputed that such a strict law was not reasonable or fair by standards of our current culture.
* But what was done was done. The Judge was firm in his decision.

3-4, How can we interpret this present time?

* Jesus rebuked them for being able to interpret the signs of the weather, but not the signs of the times.
* Jesus set a good example in this regard.

Luke 17:22-30 reads,

Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. **23** People will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. **24** For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. **25** But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. **26** “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. **27** People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. **28** “It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. **29** But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. **30** “It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

3-5, Why is it critical for us to do so?

* Again we need Jesus’ right perspective.
* Jesus is our Good Shepherd who is able to guide us into the right path.
* Also when we rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit we are led into the right path of truth.
* Young people’s immoral lives, homosexuality, and demon worship make this country’s future look hopeless.
* Even presidential candidates are often ignorant and indifferent concerning people and culture’s problem of sin.
* They only talk about how to make America strong again. People have itching ears to listen to them.
* May the Lord have mercy on each of us so that we may grow up as Bible teachers to discern our times and share the truth of God.
1. Read verses 57-59. What does it mean to “judge for yourselves what is right”? (57) Why is it important to reconcile with our adversary? Who is our adversary? How can you reconcile before too late? (58) What is his warning to those who are not willing to reconcile to the end? (59)

4-1, Read verses 57 - 59.

**57** “Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? **58** As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. **59** I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

4-2, What does it mean to “judge for yourselves what is right”? (57)

**57** “Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right?

* Jesus challenged them, and he challenges each one of us, to judge for ourselves what is right.
* He wants us to examine the Scriptures, think for ourselves and accept him as our true King and the Savior and the Lord.
* Each person will be responsible for their own decision.

4-3, Why is it important to reconcile with our adversary?

 ***As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.***

* This is another expression of Jesus in assessing their lives.
* No one is righteous before God.

Romans 3:9-10 reads,

 “What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. **10** As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one”

* Their situation, like ours, is precarious. We are like people on the verge of judgment and imprisonment.
* It is high time for us to plead for mercy and for a settlement. It’s time to accept Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our Savior.
* Otherwise, we will pay the full consequence for our sins. The gospel message is a matter of life and death; it demands a response and time is short.
* When we die, or when Jesus comes again, our opportunity to accept him will pass. (Period)
* Then it will be too late to ask God for mercy. So we must ask now. Be Ready, Be Faithful, Be Rewarded now.
* Today Jesus has taught us how to live in light of his coming again. Jesus urges us to be ready.
* We must overcome the poisonous influence of postmodernism, hedonism and materialism, clothe ourselves with Christ daily, and have living hope in our hearts.

Revelation 3:18-19 reads,

 “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.”

* Jesus also urges us to be faithful to our mission, knowing that he rewards and punishes.
* When we are ready and faithful, we will be rewarded. May each of us be ready, be faithful and be rewarded.

4-4, Who is our adversary?

* In the context, our adversary is the Sovereign God, our Heavenly Father.

4-5, How can you reconcile before too late? (58)

***58 As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.***

* Again anyone who can judge what is right can see the importance and good of getting right with God *before* we come before Him as Judge.
* If one waits until they will stand before His throne of judgment, the time will then be too late.

 ***try hard to be reconciled on the way***

* We can also say that in light of the work of Jesus at the cross, God offers a settlement out of court (before judgment) with God, by putting our loving trust in who Jesus is and what He has done for us on the cross.

4-6, What is his warning to those who are not willing to reconcile to the end? (59)

***59 I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”***

* This helps to explain the fearful, yet Biblical truth that hell is eternal; because payment for sins is required, and imperfect humanity can’t make a perfect payment, required by a perfect God.
* The coin Jesus referred to here was “The Lepton; lepton means the thin one; it was the smallest coin.” (Barclay)
* The punishment of hell is eternal, just as life is eternal in heaven (Matthew 25:46, 2 Thessalonians 1:9).
* The torment of hell is forever (Revelation 14:11), and the fires of hell are not quenched, burning forever (Mark 9:48).
* The unjust have their own resurrection, presumably with bodies suited to endure the punishment of hell.

John 5:28-30 reads,

 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice **29** and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. **30** By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

Acts 24:15 reads,

 “and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

**Conclusion**

 We learned that Jesus came to wake us up with fire and division. Let us live with his holy fire burning in our hearts so that we may be ready for Jesus to come. We are not victims of this generation but good soldiers of Jesus Christ who must keep our lamps burning and share the gospel. Through the power of the gospel, many lost souls will be restored and reconciled to God. May the Lord richly bless our prayer to bring fire and division so that America may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Amen.

One word: Holy Fire!