

The 10th Sunday after Pentecost
“Jesus’ fire and its global aftermath!”

Luke 12:49-51

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 10th Sunday after Pentecost is from Luke 12:49-51

“49 “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.”

So far the text:

Most often when we think of uncontrollable raging fires, our first reaction is distress and sadness. For it is true that such a fire brings a loss of life to animals and people and loss of homes, businesses. In a recent episode of “America’s Got Talent” the Benn family who had lost their home in Altadena California sang a heart moving song to bring awareness to the world of the losses they and others had suffered. Indeed in this world, whether it be by fire, or flood or hurricane or earthquake, there is devastation and sorrow. Peace from all harm and danger and hurt can never be found on this earth.

So, when we hear Jesus say that He brings fire on the earth, that seems like the opposite of what the world needs or wants. And when He says that He comes not to bring peace on earth but division, that again, seems like just the opposite of what the world is clamoring for.

But, the fire that Jesus brought and continues to cast upon the whole earth is anything but uncontrollable. For it was precisely planned from the foundations of the earth. Jesus coming was a controlled burn with a precise plan. Like a controlled burn of a forest removes the undergrowth so that raging uncontrollable fires do not take place, so Jesus coming had a good purpose.

His fire brought true peace. His fire quenched the hellfire of destruction which the devil had set aflame on all humanity. Jesus’ coming was a controlled burn, for He Himself

purposely gave Himself to be burned on the altar of the cross. The Lamb of God came to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. And this sacrifice stopped the raging fire of eternal destruction for all humanity once and for all because of its sin.

When Jesus spoke of this fire, His upcoming death, how He wished that it was already kindled. How He wanted His greatest work, the salvation of the world, to already be accomplished! This was a baptism by fire. Jesus was distressed to think of what was ahead of Him. He sweat blood in the Garden of Gethsemane as the moment drew so near.

It was the only way to save the world from eternal hell fire – for the Son of God to endure the fire of hell on the cross, the full wrath of the Father’s rage against sin and extinguish it once and for all. Jesus did not shirk from the Father’s will, though He knew He would suffer the torments of hell for all people.

And by His death and resurrection, Jesus brought true peace to the world. Indeed, the angels sang of this true peace on earth at His birth. For this true peace is reconciliation between God’s creation and the Creator. This gift of salvation has been won for all people.

“16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

This gift of life won by Jesus on the cross is for all and whoever believes will not perish. But therein lies what divides the world. For Jesus death brings division. All who reject Jesus and do not believe in Him will perish. And those who perish without the Son will burn eternally in hell for the punishment of their sins.

The point in history that divides all people is Jesus’ crucifixion. This is the fire which Jesus casts to the earth. For by His death, all the earth is purified of sin. But all who reject His death are destroyed by fire because they remain in sin. The cross literally divided a believer and unbeliever on Jesus right and left.

When Jesus returns He will either find a faithful servant or an unbelieving servant. God’s Word divides all people. Jesus’ death on the cross brings a global aftermath. The great reward of heaven is given to the faithful believer but eternal punishment for the unbeliever.

“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Eternally beaten in the fire of hell. Yes, there are even degrees of punishment in hell. As Jesus continues: **“But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.”** Hell itself is an unimaginable torment with the greatest degrees of torture for the vilest of offenders.

If Jesus had not come the world would carry on in its blindness. But because Jesus did come, He brings the fire that either purifies, that is, the Gospel, or destroys, the full weight of the Law.

By Jesus death and resurrection, Jesus shielded the world from the fiery darts of the evil one. He suffered them all.

As Psalm 18 tells us:

“Psalm 18:2

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

And later in Psalm 18 God tells us:

Psalm 18:30

“As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.”

That is where the division comes. For some do not trust the word of the Lord. Some reject the shield of faith that is offered to them to quench the fiery darts of the devil.

This division between believer and unbeliever is found within families as Jesus said...between father and children, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law and so on.

Throughout the history of the world, some have believed and were saved as we have been hearing in our epistle readings from Hebrews. And some have persecuted believers and were lost.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Yes, God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. God is a powerful fire that rescued the Israelites and destroyed the unbelieving Egyptians.

As Exodus 13:21 tells us God led the Israelites as a pillar of fire by night.

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.

In fact, the pillar of fire protected the Israelites from the Egyptians who were pursuing them. Exodus 14:24

“24 Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.”

Again, God's presence on Mount Sinai is described as a consuming fire. The Israelites who believed God's word were saved and entered the promised land. Those who didn't perished in the wilderness. God's Word spoken to Moses on the fiery mountain brought division.

In our Old Testament reading from Jeremiah 23, God's Word itself is described as fire. For false prophets were leading the Israelites astray. They told the people that they had visions and dreams. And in these visions, they attributed false teachings to God. **“The Lord has said, “You shall have peace” ’; and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you.’ ”**

They told the people to do whatever you want and you will live in peace. No evil will come upon you. Are there not false prophets today doing the same? Not speaking the true Word of God but being influenced by worldly concepts?

No, God did not send these prophets. For God divides, separates and punishes all who are against Him from those who follow Him. **“How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, 27 who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal.**

28 “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord. 29 “Is not My word like a fire?” says the Lord,”

So, God showed His power against the false prophets of Baal, by consuming Elijah’s altar with fire and proved that He was the true God. The truth always brings division and those false prophets were killed.

The wheat is gathered into the barns and the chaff is burned. God’s true Word divides and judges as fire against those who believe and teach falsely. So also is the final judgement which Jesus spoke of in Matthew 13.

“Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:10)

And in Matthew 13, Jesus is the sower of the good seed, speaks of the punishment of the tares.

Matthew 13:37-43

“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

In the final harvest of judgment day, the tares, that is, the sons of the wicked one, the devil, will be burned in the furnace of fire. But the good seed, the righteous by faith in Jesus will shine forth as the sun. The righteous are described as bright fiery sun. Fire is pictured as being glorious!

For, Jesus did not come to bring a temporal worldly peace that the false prophets were proclaiming. But He brought a true peace by His death and resurrection...peace with God that your sins are forgiven...the peace of Christ’s righteousness that defends our

conscious from any accusation. This fire of the Gospel cleanses us from all the impurities of our sins.

This peace He gives to us in our baptism...in Yahir's baptism.

Matthew 3:11

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

The fire of the good news of salvation. Pentecost fire. Life giving fire that purges sin and gives new growth by the Holy Spirit.

As was prophesied in Malachi 3 Jesus would come to cast fire on the earth.

**"And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,"
Says the Lord of hosts. 2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap.
3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord
An offering in righteousness.**

The Son of God is a fire that cleanses all who believe but destroys all who would reject Him and follow false prophets and false teachings. Jesus' fire brings division. One either confesses Him as one's Savior or denies Him.

In both Matthew 10, the parallel reading of our Gospel, and our Gospel from Luke 12, Jesus clearly states the division that His coming into the world has brings.

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

The fire of the Gospel purges sin, but the fire of God's wrath destroys the unbeliever. Jesus divides the confessor from the denier. He alone gives true peace. Now and eternally. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)