

# Luke 12:49-59

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[0:00] Luke chapter 12. We saw in Luke 9, verse 51, that Jesus set his face to Jerusalem.

You could miss it, but it's not just, I think I'm going to Jerusalem.

Jesus set his face to Jerusalem. He had a lot of places he was going to go on the way, but he set his face to Jerusalem. And that was because he was going to Jerusalem to do something, something important.

Now, he'd been in Galilee, and while he was there, and even as he left, the crowds continued to grow. And in his journey to Jerusalem, they will continue to grow for a while.

We're getting close to the top, to the pinnacle of the crowds that Jesus would have. Their thinking, their anticipation growing, their thinking is, Is this the Messiah that will overthrow our enemies and reign on the throne of David and bring peace to our nation?

[1:25] That which we've longed for, for many hundreds of years. I'm sure the air was charged with excitement. But I was, even as we were talking about the eternality of God this morning, I was thinking about this passage, and I was thinking about the goodness of God for his disciples and for us.

Even as he was in the midst of an air charged with excitement, Jesus knew that his disciples needed to be prepared for the way things would really be.

I don't think, in fact, I'm pretty sure the disciples didn't understand what he was speaking of at the time. But, that the Holy Spirit later would bring to the disciples' minds, This teaching that we're going to look at today.

A teaching that says, I'm going to cast fire on the earth. A teaching that says, I'm not bringing peace, but division. And that teaching will be an encouragement to his people.

An encouragement to help them understand some of the difficult situations that they're in. So, I'd like for us to read, starting in verse 49 of chapter 12, through the end of the chapter, verse 59.

[2:57] I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished.

Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on, in one house there will be five divided.

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 her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. He also said to the crowds, When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, a shower is coming.

And so it happens. When you see the south wind blow, you say, there will be scorching heat. And it happens. You hypocrites.

[4:03] You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky. But why do you not know how to interpret the present time? And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?

As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer puts you in prison.

And I tell you, you will never get out of prison until you've paid the very last penny. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for this passage of scripture.

I thank you for what it says for us. I thank you for the way you call the crowds to decision and warn them of their situation.

I pray that you would be with us. Lord, may we be encouraged, exhorted, rebuked. Lord, may we be brought to you for the needs that we have today.

[5:09] And I pray that you would work in Jesus' name. Amen. So as Jesus is continuing his teaching, still at this point as we've begun our passage, the first part of the passage is directed towards the disciples.

And he makes this odd statement about fire and its effects. He says, I came to cast fire on earth. What is this fire? And there are several interpretations that good men have had. I'll just summarize them quickly.

I'm going to summarize them. Normally, I wouldn't talk about something that's not what I'm going to, but I'm going to summarize them because I think they're also included in where I'm going. So some have thought that Jesus is referring when he says, I'm going to cast fire on the earth, that Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit.

Because fire is often talking about, or the fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, verses 3 and 4, it says, And divided tongues as a fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

[6:25] It's a good application. It can be, indeed, that part of what Jesus is speaking about is this idea of, I'm going to cast fire on the earth, and he's speaking of the Holy Spirit.

Others will say, Oh, no, that's referring to judgment. Judgment separates and purifies. And references made to Luke chapter 3, verses 16 and 17.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hands to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barns. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

And we can see the judgment and the division there, and how when Jesus casts this fire on earth, there's going to be discernment, judgment, division.

And I think that is also a good application of what's going on here. But in my mind, I think the thing that fits best is that the fire refers to the gospel.

[7:33] I'm casting the gospel on the earth. Because the Holy Spirit has to be a part of that. Because division comes with that.

So I think he's referring to the fact that he's casting the gospel to the earth. He came to cast the fire of the gospel. It came from him.

He's the one who's doing it. It is provided. Jesus provides this gospel by the baptism that he's about to accomplish.

And we'll talk more about that in just a second. And this gospel that is cast into the earth as fire is meant to go to the four corners of the earth.

Jesus is casting the gospel. And just like if you throw a spark out, it will grow. Sometimes flame and fury. Other times smolter.

[8:35] Move slowly. Imperceptibly. Still growing. Until it breaks out again. And Jesus says, I will cast fire on the earth.

Which is a real blessing. We needed him to send the gospel. It goes on to say, Jesus says, He says, Would that it were, that it was already kindled.

It was not at that point kindled. The gospel wasn't going out like it was going to. Now, we can see shadows of the gospel from the Old Testament.

Through the Old Testament. And we believe that people were saved in the Old Testament the same way that we are. But they were looking at the shadows of things to come. People were looking forward and trusting in the one who would fulfill the promise of being the serpent crusher.

They were looking forward to someone that Isaiah painted in chapters 52 and 53. They saw someone who would suffer and die for sins.

[9:49] And they could only see shadows. But even as they saw shadows, it was the truth of the gospel. And they could trust in that. But the clearness of the gospel didn't come until Jesus came and endured that baptism that he spoke of.

The actual work that Jesus needed to fulfill to cast that gospel had not been done yet to this point. And so it was Jesus' desire that it would be kindled.

And it was interesting to me to think about the fact, and we'll see this in just a second, but as Jesus looked forward to it, he wasn't looking forward through a party.

He wasn't looking forward through a celebration. He wasn't looking forward through something that was easy. But even though what we're going to talk about was in front of him, he was eager that the fire be cast on earth.

And he couldn't wait till it was kindled because he longed for the gospel to go out. It was the reason he came.

[11:05] Jesus desired the gospel to go out to those who were his. John 17, verse 8. For I have given them, this is part of Jesus' high priestly prayer, as he speaks to the Father in that time, very shortly before he gives his life for his people.

And we find some of the passion of our Lord as he speaks his prayer. And he says, For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them, and have come to know in truth that I came from you.

They have believed that you sent me. Jesus came for these people. It was his purpose to come to give the gospel to these people.

And John goes on, or the Lord goes on in his prayer, but John, as he records it, Jesus desires that those who are his would be with him. Again, eager to cast out the gospel, looking through what he would look through.

John 17, 24. He says, Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

[12:20] This was not easy, what Jesus was doing. Jesus was looking forward through a baptism that he dreaded, but he was eager for the gospel to come, and willing to do what needed to happen for the gospel to come.

So, what did have to happen before the fire was cast? Luke 12, 50 says, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is completed.

Jesus had a baptism he needed to endure. And you could ask yourself, what was that baptism? It was not the baptism in the Jordan.

He had already done that. He wasn't looking forward. That was in his past. This baptism, he was going to be immersed.

And don't think water here. He was going to be immersed in the giving of himself, immersed in the sacrifice of himself.

[13:30] He was going to be immersed in what would have to be laid upon him and wrought against him in order to have this gospel fire cast on the earth and spread to the ends of the earth.

This baptism was his suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. This was no small, as I mentioned earlier, it was no party he was looking through.

This was the greatest agony any human being could ever suffer. In fact, it was so great that it required that the sufferer not be just human.

He would need the value of God, but he would also need the strength of God to be able to endure the wrath that he would suffer, the punishment that he would suffer in order to be able to cast this gospel out into the earth and let it kindle and grow.

He had this baptism to endure. It was so, this baptism was so great that it caused the Son of Man great distress until it was accomplished.

[14:44] He mentions it in that verse. But in Isaiah 53, 3, he says, he was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

That's speaking of his whole life. And as one from whom men hid their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

He carried the weight of rejection and the coming cross all his life from the moment he was conceived and then born.

The view of the cross was always ahead. And that was what he had to go through in order for the joy of this fire being cast on earth to come to pass.

And yet he did it. And then keeping on in his life, even as all the sins of all God's people were about to be placed upon him in the garden in Matthew 26, 36 to 39, we see of the heaviness, the ugliness of what he had to face and that which distressed him.

[15:56] It says, Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane and he said to his disciples, Sit here while I go over there and pray. And taking with him Peter and two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

Then he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell on his face and prayed, My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. And we know that he prayed that prayer and came back hoping that the disciples were praying with him, found them not praying, went back and prayed again and come back to the disciples hoping that they were praying with him and went back the third time to pray.

And that time, as he prayed, the agony of what he must endure, the distress of what he faced was so bad that he would sweat great drops of blood in agony as he looked forward to the sin of the world being placed upon him and then the suffering that would come and the wrath of God that would be laid upon him, he was in distress as he approached the cross.

And then even in the midst of that, the pinnacle of his distress, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[17:30] He saw all that, he knew all that as he faced the cross and yet he says, I'm casting fire on the earth and I can't wait till it's kindled. But I have this baptism to go through.

What a beautiful, blessed picture of our Savior and what he did for us. And may it warm our love, may it draw us to him, may we ever love him and want to be close to him and serve him more and more because of even what he has done in giving himself.

But as Jesus here, looking forward to the cross, thinks of what he has to do and speaks about the joy that he faces, he warns his disciples, even as he's glad for the fire of the gospel being cast on the earth, he warns his disciples of the effect casting the fire on earth would have.

Now, as I read this passage again, I want you to think about the fact that he was looking forward to those 12. He was looking forward to the other disciples that were gathered here.

He was looking forward to you. If you're trusting Christ, he's looking forward in care to you as he says these words. Do not think that I have come to give peace on earth.

[19:01] I'm sorry. Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No. I tell you, rather, division. For from now on, in one house, there will be five divided, 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 against daughter-in-law and her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.

He also said to the crowds, I'm sorry, I read one verse too far. He speaks of what they could expect when he cast this fire. Such joy to him.

Now, he's not in this joy of casting the fire on earth. He's not saying it's joyful. He's not glad that you're going through what he's going to warn us of.

He's saying the gospel is joy. But be careful. I don't want you to get the wrong mentality. He's saying there's going to be some difficulty in this.

[20:05] Jesus says he did not come to give peace on earth but division. I mean, this would curl our eyes, wrinkle our face. What?

Why are you saying this? What about Isaiah? Isaiah 9, 6 says, For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

What about what the angel said in Luke 2, 4? Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those whom he is pleased. well, there will be peace, can be peace, between those who know Christ, each other in the body of Christ.

But these statements, these statements, the statement of Isaiah, the statement of the angels, and others are things that will take place eventually. Someday, we will know total peace.

Now, we as Christians can know peace in our hearts. now, because of the work of Christ, we can know peace in our body of Christ here, because of the love we have one another, we can know peace between people from other churches that know Christ and enjoy that peace.

[21:23] We can have all kinds of peace. But in our lives, there are things that are not so peaceful. Remember what Simeon, remember Simeon back in Luke chapter 2, that old man who was kept alive until Jesus came?

He says in verse 34 and 35, And Simon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is opposed.

And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that the thoughts from many hearts will be revealed. there's this, oh, peace.

Yes, peace is coming. We have peace in some respects. But even when Jesus was born, Simeon warned, there's going to be division. There's going to be heartache.

And so, Jesus is teaching here that the gospel causes division. division between all kinds of people, governments, ethnic peoples.

[22:41] The gospel can cause all kinds of divisions. But Jesus is mainly speaking about the kinds of divisions that would cause us the most hurt, the most difficulty, even the most intimate relationships.

And so, Jesus makes reference to the strength of that division when he quotes Micah 7, 6 when he says father against son, son against father, mother against daughter, daughter-in-law.

And it's just in that family, that's how it usually took place. There was a father and mother and the daughter would live there until she's married and the son would live there and the woman he takes would come and live with her.

So, basically, in the smallest family unit, if there was a boy and girl child, there would be five adult people in that house. And Jesus is saying in the most intimate of relationships, the gospel is going to cause division.

And the division will be so strong that family members will be willing to turn against each other because of the gospel. That's why he quotes Micah 7, 6. He's talking about the strength of this division, the hatred that comes about because of this division.

[23:59] It is so strong that there will be people who are willing to turn against their family because of the gospel. Brothers and sisters, many of you know way too well the division the gospel has caused in your family.

first of all, Jesus is saying this is not unexpected. It's not unusual. Christ expected this.

And praise God, it's not a situation we want to be in, but praise God, our Savior knew this situation was coming and prepared his disciples for the friends who would turn away from them, for the religious leaders who would turn their back on them, but even more for the family members who because of the gospel would have nothing to do with them, preparing them for that.

Christ knew and expected this. And so, I want to encourage you here today. Now, maybe you're in a relationship where a family member doesn't like you very much or you don't have much to talk about because of the gospel.

The first thing I want to say is let this division be the division because of the gospel truly be because of the gospel.

[25:29] too often divisions in family because of the gospel is because we're jerks and we're not kind and we're not loving in the things we say and we say things in crude and harmful ways.

Let that not be the offense of the gospel. That is not our place. We should seek to bring them to Christ. We should be gentle.

We need to stand where we need to stand but we need to be as unto Christ loving to these people. So let it be truly because of the gospel not because of our unloving or hurtful ways.

But know the truth. The gospel causes division and some of you will know that division closer than you would ever dream.

Some of you have mates that don't know the Lord. some of you have children who don't know the Lord. Some of you have parents or distant relatives who don't know the Lord and sometimes that can be some of the most difficult situations that you can face.

[26:39] I'm so lonely without my mate here or I hate it that my kids won't come around because I've trusted Christ and they want nothing to do with me. Jesus knows your situation.

Jesus' own brothers and sisters were against him during his ministry. Mark 3, 21 and when his family heard it they went out to seize him for they were saying he's out of his mind.

In John 7, 3 through 5 so his brothers said to him leave here and go to Judea that your disciples may also see the works that you are doing. He's kind of mocking him. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly.

If you do these things show yourself to the world. And John ends that phrase by saying for not even his brothers believed him.

Here is the son of God himself who had, scripture points out, five or six brothers and sisters and none of them for a while.

[27:49] wanted anything to do with him. Later, Jesus' brother came to know the Lord and pastored the church in Jerusalem. Another brother came to know the Lord, Jude, the first one was James.

Jude, he wrote an epistle of the New Testament. So, in this recognition that the gospel causes division, I want us to remember, brothers and sisters, that there is hope.

Until they die, there's hope. That child who doesn't want to talk to you because you're a Christian, there's hope. Keep praying for that child.

That wife or uncle or dad or mom or whatever who just can't stand that you know Christ.

There's hope. Keep praying. Keep trusting. The Lord knows your situation. It didn't surprise him. In fact, he wanted you to know before he even gave his own life that the gospel was going to cause division.

[29:08] I want to encourage you, brothers and sisters, also not to let that division discourage you in other ways. Let me remind you of this truth first.

Psalms 27:10, For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me up.

Hebrews 13, 5, he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, even if your mate does, even if your children do.

he knows. But this is the warning I was getting to. I want us to be careful. Sometimes we say, I can't go with you tonight because my wife wouldn't enjoy it.

Or I can't go with you tonight because my husband wouldn't enjoy it. You know, we're caring and concerning, rightly so, about our families. We want to be loving to them.

We want to minister to them. We want to be accounting of their thinking. But when it comes to the things of Christ, don't let this division be that which keeps you from serving Christ.

[30:17] Matthew 10, 37, whoever loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Don't let your mate or your children.

This is hard. I know. No one wants to leave their mate behind. No one wants to just go on without their children. But don't let it keep you from following Christ and serving Christ.

And I would give this exhortation to young people. As you look forward, it can't be guaranteed, you know, someone can give a false profession and all this, but young people, this is so important.

It's such an important principle to remember that as you're looking for a mate. 2 Corinthians 6.14, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness or what fellowship has light with darkness, you're walking into a division.

You're walking into hard times. Be careful to find that mate that knows the Lord. having instructed the disciples on the effect of the gospel.

[31:32] Jesus is still amongst the crowds. He's talking to the disciples. He's been going back and forth. Talk to the crowds, talk to the disciples. Talk to the crowds, talk to the disciples. Taking what he's told the crowds and applying it to the disciples.

Taking what he's talked to the disciples about and exhorting the crowds. And this is one instance where he does that. He takes, he's been talking to the disciples now, not only for what we've looked at today, but part of what we looked at last time.

And here he's been talking to the disciples and the crowd is here. And you think about it. He's eager to cast the gospel into the earth. So he's not forgetting about them.

This is the exact reason he's coming. He's coming that people would come to know him. And so he turns to the crowds and throws out this exhortation, this challenge to the crowds, looking for them to turn to him.

He says in Luke 12, 54 to 56. He said also to the crowds, when you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, a shower's coming. And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say there will be a scorching heat, and it happens.

[32:38] So you hypocrites, you know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but you do not know how to interpret the present time. What's he getting at? And obviously, we even today, if the western sky gets dark, it's probably going to rain.

And even today, if the south wind blows, usually it's warmer. And we just observe our circumstances. Well, these crowds have been observing the circumstances for months now. And the crowds have been growing. And even if they weren't there, they were hearing of things. Did you hear? Jesus raised a man from the dead. Did you hear? Jesus healed a man of leprosy. Did you hear? A blind man can see now because of Jesus. Did you hear his preaching? It's with authority. There were evidences all over the place that Jesus is something else, not what they've seen before.

Jesus is the God man. I don't understand it. Speaking as if one of the, I don't understand it, but something's here.

[33:49] And Jesus is saying, there's evidence all around you. And you look at evidence all the time and you make right assumptions and you, yet you won't make this right assumption about me.

And he calls them hypocrites. Trying, I say trying, that's, that's a human way of thinking, but I'll say it. Trying to get them to see they need him.

They need to turn to him. What he's doing is for them. So Jesus calls them to recognize who he is and follow him.

And he goes into the next section and basically he's kind of like saying, but don't wait. You see who I am, you can see all the evidence, you need to make a decision, but don't wait.

And then he goes and gives this, this parable-like kind of thing in Luke 12, 57 to 59. And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right as you go to the accuser before the magistrate?

[34:51] And he goes on to talk about this normal situation. If you were in debt to somebody, you would be paying them off. And if you got to a point where you couldn't pay them off, they would then come find you.

A lot of things happen like that today. They would come find you and they would require that you pay it off. And if you couldn't pay it off, then you were grabbed and they hauled you to the judge. And he'd bring you to the judge, give you to the officer, and the officer would take you into the judge. Once you got there, you were already in their custody. And the judge would decide, well, is this unfair?

You know, did he pay? And the lender's falsely accusing, they would write the situation. and the decision that was made was final.

If he said, you owe every dime, you owed every dime. And you were put in what was called debtor's prison, which was popular over a hundred years ago, is not popular now, but you were put in debtor's prison.

[35:52] And you would stay there and you would work at this low wage rate until you paid your debt off. It's interesting, the word that Luke uses here is a lepta, it's the name of the coin.

It's one 126th of a day's wage. So, pennies aren't even worthy to be produced anymore.

But that's the kind of thinking that it is, a penny. You're going to stay in the debtor's prison, which sometimes involved beatings, until you paid the last penny.

So, Jesus is illustrating the importance of making this decision now. Before you stand in judgment, before the great judge, who will indeed make you pay to the last penny for your sin.

And there's no getting out. And since our sin, our great sin is against an infinite God, the penalty we pay would be infinite.

[37:08] So, there's no getting out after 10,000 years. No getting out after 100,000 years. No getting out at any point in all of eternity because you've transgressed an infinite God.

God's love and mercy is saying, deal with him now. It's such a, it sounds sharp, but it's such a strong compassion.

Look, the time is short and there's coming a time when you can't do anything about it. And you'll be stuck where you are. So, person, as you're sitting here today, have you observed who Christ is? Have you begun to see that he is the son of God? Have you seen how his word teaches that you are a sinner? You have a need of your sin taken care of. Jesus came to go through that baptism to be able to pay for your sin.

You ought to see the evidence is plain. He is the savior. But you must do it now. Maybe you've grown up in this church.

[38:20] Maybe you've been here and been here and been here and you know everything that is said but you have never addressed this situation to yourself. Jesus is saying do it now before it's too late.

There is coming a day when it will be too late. As we come to the end of this passage we come to the Lord's Supper.

Now it's a beautiful thing in and of itself. always. But as we think about this casting of the gospel and the baptism that he was facing and how he suffered as he looked forward to it and then suffered through it.

We get a physical picture of that before us today. We get to observe the Lord's Supper. It reminds us of how he paid for our sins and absorbed God's wrath.

it reminds us that he provided righteousness that makes us pleasing in God's sight. Not just okay. Not just go over there and hide in a corner. But pleasing.

[39:31] Pleasing enough to enter his very presence. Pleasing enough to be able to call him father. If you're trusting Christ for salvation your sins are cleansed and God is pleased with you.

But this table's not for everyone. Well let me just say who should come to the Lord's table? It's for those who are trusting Christ.

Who are resting in the work that he has done. If you're here today and you're trying to be good enough plus trust Christ you're not trusting in the work he's done.

You need to be trusting in the work he's done. It's for those who are trusting Christ as Savior. Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins. Who nonetheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering death of Christ.

And who's also been who's also and for the person also who desires more and more strength in their faith to lead a life that pleases him. Are you one who's trusting Christ?

[40:44] Even though you're struggling with sin and desire to be rid of it this table's for you. Do you want to grow in your relationship with Christ?

This table's for you. But warning also hypocrites and those who are unrepentant eat and drink judgment on themselves. So if you claim to be a Christian and know that you're not let that bread and cup pass because there is judgment to those who partake in an unworthy manner.

If you're trusting Christ and you have sin that you know you have and you choose not to repent of it, let that bread and cup pass.

Again, you eat and drink judgment on yourself. Wait, deal with that sin and then come back the next time. If the men would come who are going to help me serve.

