**Series – Dr. Luke’s Perspective on Jesus**

**Text – Luke 12:49-59**

**Message 53 (September 16, 2018)**

**GETTING IT RIGHT**

***49“I came to cast fire on the earth and would that it were already kindled! 50I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! 51Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53They 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.” 54He 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. 55And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. 56You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? 57“And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? 58As 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 put you in prison. 59I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny.”***

# Introduction

1. There are some things in life that are inconsequential. There are other things that we better get right. For example, if I was to defuse an explosive device, I better not cut the wrong wire! You get the point.
2. Jesus was speaking to thousands of people (12:1). He was warning them not to be fooled by the Pharisees’ hypocrisy. He continued to warn them about who should be feared and who should be acknowledged. He was interrupted by someone who wanted the Lord to arbitrate a dispute about an inheritance and He warned about being consumed with the desire for things while failing to be rich toward God. He connected that with why we need not to be anxious because God takes care of His own. That led to a discourse on the coming judgment for all who fail to acknowledge the true Master and Lord.
3. And all of that led to these verses at the end of chapter 12, where Jesus tells the crowd that there are some things that they must not get wrong. Some were wrong about Jesus – who He was and why He came. We don’t want to get that wrong! We have lots of things in life that we have not figured out, but if we fail to discern what really matters, that’s a problem. If you don’t know that there is a judgment coming and there is no way you could be declared innocent, then. You better, right now, do what you need to do so that you will not be required to stand before the Judge! If we stand before Him in our sin, it’s too late. We need to get these things right!

**I. GETTING IT RIGHT WHY HE CAME (49-53)**

A. A fire and a baptism

1. Fire here is a negative image. The immediate context is judgment. In Luke 3:16-17, John was answering questions about himself and about Jesus – ***16John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”***

2. Casting fire on the earth is not the Holy Spirit in this context. It is God’s judgment being poured out. And such judgment comes and will come ultimately. Jesus is describing His mission – ***“I have come…”*** There are many reasons recorded why Jesus came. He said, ***“I have come to seek and to save the lost.” “I have not come to abolish the Law and the prophets. I have come to fulfill them.”*** There are the statement here in our text about coming to cause division and coming to cast fire. Jesus said, ***“I have come to call sinners to repentance.” “I have come down from heaven.” “I have come in my Father’s name.” “I have come into the world as light.” “I have come for this hour.” “I have come that you might have life.” “I have come to testify to the truth.”*** Jesus not only came to save, He also came to judge. But in order to judge or to save, He would need to be baptized with the terrible baptism of the wrath of the Father that He would pour out on His Son. Surely we can understand the statement, ***“How great is my distress until it is accomplished!”*** He reached the height of that agonizing anticipation in Gethsemane. He would bear the weight of that distress as He endured the Father’s separation as Jesus “became sin for us.” When He cried out, ***“It is finished”***, the work of redemption was complete. That was the triumphant cry of victory! The word “accomplished” and the word “it is finished” are from the same root word. Whatever view these people had of Jesus, most had it wrong.

B. Peace or division

1. The OT prophet Isaiah called Jesus ***“the Prince of Peace.”*** His birth brought words from heaven, ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among those with whom he is pleased.”*** Paul said of Jesus, ***“He is our peace.”*** But here Jesus declared, ***“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.”***

2. Jesus and His Gospel cause division. The world is okay with people being spiritual. They are not okay when we declare Jesus to be God. To say that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life is to declare that every other claim to being the way or the truth or the life is false. When we say we are right to believe Him and you are wrong to reject Him, there will be division! Families may well be torn apart over one or more members of the family embracing Jesus. Consider what Jesus said as recorded by Matthew (10:21) regarding the extent family members would go to separate themselves from one of their own who would embrace Jesus – ***“Brother will deliver brother over to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.”***  We need to get it right why He came and what that cost Him and what that might cost those who put their trust in Him. We need to be…

**II. GETTING IT RIGHT WHAT MATTERS (54-56)**

1. Predicting the weather
2. We are all about the weather. We talk about weather all the time. And we have a reasonable handle on predicting the weather – or at least we think we do. (“It’s a 50% chance of rain today.” Think about that for a moment. That means that it might rain, but it might not. That’s profound!)
3. Jesus noted that when the people of His day saw a cloud rising from the west, which was coming from the Mediterranean Sea, that likely meant a shower was coming – and usually it rained. If a south wind was blowing, coming from the desert, it was a sure bet that it was going to be a hot one! Unfortunately, the people listening to Jesus were better weather people than theologians. They could interpret the sky but not what was happening around them! They failed to correctly interpret the time in which they were living.

B. Interpreting the time

1. What was Jesus getting at? The people knew what the weather was going to be, but they had no clue about the God who made the earth and the sky. They could predict what was coming in the form of wind or rain, but they had no clue in regard to God’s grace or His judgment.

2. We are the keepers of trivia. Just ask. But the Word of God might be a different story. I remember Howard Hendricks asking a neighbor a question along these lines – “If you knew as much about your job as most people know about the Bible after the same amount of exposure, what would happen to you?” His answer was immediate. “They would tell me not to let the door hit me on the way out!”

3. We need to get right what really matters. Knowing God really matters but we will not know much about Him if we are not listening to what he has said in His Word. These people were standing in the very presence of Jesus, listening to God teach them! And they still got it wrong! We have the competed Word of god. We can be in the presence of Jesus via His word at any time, day or night, and we still so often get it wrong. O, let us be right about the things that truly matter!

**III. GETTING IT RIGHT BECAUSE OF WHAT’S COMING (57-59)**

1. Settling the case
2. The parable presented is a person who is guilty, probably involving some financial debt. He is traveling with the one who is bringing the case to a magistrate for the preliminary hearing. The magistrate, after hearing the case to see that there was enough evidence to proceed, would turn it over to the judge to pronounce judgment. In this case, there was no doubt a guilty verdict would be pronounced. The judge would then turn the convicted person over to an officer who would throw the guilty guy in prison. And in this debtor’s prison, this guy would not get out until he had paid the last penny.
3. The guy who owes the debt was not going to win. There was no wiggle room, no plea bargain, no chance for a technicality. Knowing what he was facing, he would make every effort to secure a settlement with the offended party. That’s the parable. What does that mean in the context of this passage about getting it right?

B. Facing the judgment

1. The context is about the Gospel; it’s about the impact of the Gospel; it is about judgment. While it is not fleshed out here. It’s not hard to connect the dots.

2. We are the accused and ours is an open and shut case. We are guilty without a doubt. God is the offended party. We will be judged and it will be severe. The line, ***“You will never get out until you have paid the last penny”*** is the same as saying there will never be a release. That is true for several reasons. We have no resources to pay the debt and there are no resources available to us to ever satisfy the enormous debt. And in this case, even death is not a release. Even after death, the imprisonment continues because the debt remains unpaid. How could this ever be settled? The answer rests alone with the offended party. Only the offended party could release the guilty person from the debt. It is not about a deal to be made; it is a plea for mercy to be heard and considered.

3. You know the song, ***“Depth of Mercy.”*** That’s this part of the passage: ***“Depth of mercy can there be, mercy reaching even me? God the Just His wrath forebears; me the chief of sinners, spares. So many times, my heart has strayed from His kind and perfect ways, making clear my desperate need, for His blood poured out for me. Give me grace, Lord, let me own all the wrongs that I have done. Let me now my sin deplore look to You and sin no more. There for me the Savior stands, holding forth His wounded hands. Scars which ever cry for me, once condemned, but now set free!”***

**Conclusion**

1. Kent Hughes quoted Charles Colson describing the night when he came to understand that he was a sinner and that he would face the judgment of God. ***“That night when I…sat alone in my car, my own sin – not just dirty politics, but the hatred and evil so deep within me – was thrust before my eyes, forcefully and painfully. For the first time in my life I felt unclean, and worst of all, I could not escape. In those moments of clarity, I found myself driven irresistibly into the arms of the living God*** (Hughes, p. 78).
2. John MacArthur wrote, ***So there's only one point to make here.  This is not some very complicated allegory.  He says, "If you've got any sense, you will settle your issues of guilt before you arrive at the judge."  OK?  Pretty simple.  Can't you think that through?  You better discern the time, gospel opportunity, and you better discern the threat.  You don't ever want to arrive at the Great White Throne Judgment.  You don't ever want to get there at the court and say, "I want to speak in my defense."  You won't be able to speak.  The record will speak for itself and once your guilt is revealed, and it will be in the court, you're going to be sent to an eternal punishment and every last cent, lepton, one-eighth of a penny, a mite, smallest coin, down to the last cent, you're going to pay… in full.  You're going to get the full wrath of the court on your crimes*** (November 28, 2004).
3. It’s about the Gospel. We better get it right in relation to who Jesus is and why He came. It’s about the Gospel. We better get it right in relation to what really matters. It’s about the Gospel. We better get it right because the day of reckoning is coming and there will be a judgment and we will lose unless we have been granted the mercy of God that is found in the Gospel!