

Trouble comes when we see reality as we wish it would be - **not as it is**. ...

I want you to remember this... the entire time we are in our passage today.

Trouble comes when we see reality as we wish it would be - **not as it is**.

(Boy!)... this is such a truism. (And) I realize that I am saying this in an age that is known as Post-Modernistic. Post-modernism is the ridiculous belief that “truth is not discovered. Truth is manufactured.” (You make your own reality.) ... But Christians believe that there are universal truths – they are true for everyone and we are all subject to them. (Not wanting something to be true – does not make it UNtrue. ... Anyone who has ever lost a loved one – understands this.) ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Trouble comes when we see reality as we wish it would be - **not as it is**. ...

The reason I am pounding this home right now... is because Jesus (in our passage today)... will present a stark reality to His followers... (a truth that we may not want to accept)... but Jesus knows that we must.

But before He gave this truth to His disciples... He first wanted to ensure they were carefully listening. ... Sometimes... Jesus would start off with – “Verily... verily” (or “truthfully... truthfully”)... and His listeners knew He was about to say something extremely important. It was like a college professor announcing “*This will be on the next exam...*” But in this case... Jesus doesn’t begin with: “Verily... verily.” ... No. He used a different device to snap His listeners to attention. ... He gave them (what is called in Hebrew)... a “mashal”

A mashal is a paradoxical saying that sounds unbelievable. It cuts across a prevailing opinion... looking contrary to what most would believe. ... This mashal (I’m sure) had them all asking: “...*Ahhh! What did You say...*”

Jesus...? ... Please go on... explain!" ... I am hoping that it will have the same effect on you. (Let's see...)

Luke 12:49

Is it working...? ... But hold on... it gets even MORE contrary to what we would expect Jesus to say...

Luke 12:50-51

Jesus' intent in proclaiming that He came to bring division was both to shock and to inform His followers. ... The shocking effect came easily because **peace** - not division - had been *the grand theme* of His coming... especially as described by **Luke**. ... Do you remember at the Nativity... how the angels praised God saying: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** to men on whom his favor rests*" (That's in Luke 2:14). ... The back-ground to it is (Isaiah 9:6) which foretold the Messiah would be the "*Prince of **Peace***." ... (Then)... the Father of John the Baptist prophesied about Jesus (which we saw when we were in Luke 1:78-79)

Luke 1:78-79 (ESV)

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Twice (in Luke) when Jesus healed people... the disciples heard Him say: "*Go in **peace***" (Luke 7:50; 8:48). ... (And) when Jesus sent His disciples out two by two to preach... He instructed them to say, "***Peace** to this house*" as they walked in the door (Luke 10:5).

But now Jesus outrageously says – reported in LUKE 12:51: “*Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.*” ... The Twelve were shocked. ... He definitely had their attention. ... [P A U S E] ...

(LISTEN!) We are not to settle for **false** peace. ... (Let me say that again...) We are not to settle for false peace. ... The false peace that Jesus did not come to give... is a peace that comes from seeking it at all cost. THAT peace will give-in during the course of a painful division. ... The false peace – that Jesus did **not** come to give – will settle for the status quo... in order not to make waves.

What we find in our passage today does NOT contradict the Biblical prophets... all those singing angels at the nativity... or even Jesus’ prior statements that encouraged peace. ... *Ultimately* Jesus **will** bring peace to His followers... but Jesus employs a *mashal* (here) to make an impacting announcement that division would come **first** ... (before TRUE PEACE.) Why...? (Two Reasons)...

#1. Because Jesus was getting ready to march into Jerusalem and die on a cross. His disciples were expecting Jesus to march into Jerusalem and over-throw the Roman Government and set up His physical Messianic Kingdom – to rule the world from Jerusalem. Jesus needed to prepare His mistaken followers with a reality they were wishing wasn’t true.

As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem... and the cross loomed larger and larger (so that it filled Jesus’ mental horizon)... Jesus paused to reflect on the fiery realities the cross would unleash upon Him and His followers. ... His reflections were a pre-cross reality check. ... Jesus bared His feelings (His innermost heart)... and revealed some harsh realities.

#2. Because the genuineness of our faith will be developed through such testing as **division**. ... Will **we** deny our faith in seeking a temporary sense of peace... **when it happens**...? ... (And it **will!** ... Division will come.)

If you attempt to follow Christ... you will experience division. (It is also true... of course... that some believers suffer **not** because they follow Jesus... but because they are obnoxious... caustic... judgmental... pious buffoons. (I'm sorry... but that's true. They unnecessarily bring on their own suffering.) ... But it is also a fact that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (That is exactly what 2 Timothy 3:12 says and also the message Jesus gives here). ... And sometimes the division and persecution will come from those we love the most. That is a fact. When a person receives Jesus Christ as his Savior... he/she is immediately separated from the unbelievers around them. This will be true whether they be relatives or friends.

Division surrounded Jesus and it continues to surround His followers today - as they reap the toxic venom of a rebellious and unrepentant world.

Division comes from the fact **that people must make a choice about Jesus** to either accept Him... or reject Him. They must acknowledge His deity and authority as God - or they must reject it. There is no middle ground.

The Lord knew that division over Him would come. For the last 2000 years... Jesus and the cross of Calvary have been offensive to mankind. He warned us of the difficulty of being dedicated to Him.

In the early church... Jews who became Christians were excommunicated from the synagogues and often shunned by their families. They knew the difficulties from being dedicated.

The Romans also hated Christianity because so many families were divided. The allegiance and loyalty of Christians were to the Lord - instead of the Emperor and the Roman gods and goddesses. Families were upset because Jesus was first in the lives of these believers and considered more important than the feelings of the family or the Roman government.

Even today... the road is (especially) difficult for Jews or Muslims who turn to Christ. Their own family members become their worst enemies. Jesus' coming... His words... and His call... inevitably will cause conflict between those who accept and follow Him and those who reject Him.

The mention of the name of Jesus sparks fury... anger... imprisonment... and sometimes death in Communist countries like China or Vietnam... and in Muslim nations. ... It sparks intense opposition and division even in the United States as our government is doing its best to erase God from our history and our national consciousness. ... The world is offended by Jesus and His cross. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

Try to imagine how much harder it would be – if Jesus did not warn us...? “Hey! Wait! This isn't supposed to happen!” ... Trouble comes when we see reality as we wish it would be - **not as it is**.

Please look again with me at verse 49...

Luke 12:49

This (too) is a very strange statement coming from Jesus' lips (the Prince of Peace.) ... Jesus stated that He came to cast fire on this earth and He wished it was already burning. ... What is the Lord saying here? ... What does this mean?

It does **not** mean that the Lord wished the world was on fire. ... The key (here) is understanding what the word “fire” is referring to in the context of this passage. ... First of all... in Jewish thought... fire is almost always associated or used as a symbol of judgment.

Isaiah 66:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ *“For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.*

Joel 2:30 (ESV)

³⁰ *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.*

Malachi 3:2 (ESV)

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 fullers’ soap.*

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ *and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

Jesus YEARNED to have the judgment for man’s sins completed. It was pressing upon Him... as we see in verse 50. ... The price for the sins of mankind was death. (*That* was God’s judgment.) ... Christ’s death on the cross would pay the price for that judgment. ... He would be the sin-bearer for the entire world.

What people do with THIS ACT of Christ... will determine their eternal destiny. ... The action Jesus took by dying for us on the cross... brings every human being to a fork in the road... where they must make a choice to accept Christ’s payment... or to reject it. ... There is no fence-straddling

when it comes to the matter of trusting in Christ. ... By accepting Jesus (and what He has done)... people will have eternal life. ... By rejecting Him... they will suffer eternal damnation. ... That is their judgment they have brought upon themselves.

John 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

So... Fire means judgment. ... It also refers (in Scripture) to the Holy Spirit... After Christ ascended on high... following His resurrection... the Holy Spirit indwelt all believers... beginning at Pentecost. Jesus longed for sinners to put their faith in Him - and enjoy the blessings of **1)** having their sins forgiven, **2)** the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, **3)** a home in Heaven, **4)** the inheritance of God, and **5)** the power to conquer sin in their lives. He longed for that... as verse 50 shows.

As we look at verse 50 (next) we will see a third meaning of "fire." Jesus speaks of His being baptized in it. (He means - His soon-coming death on the cross.

Luke 12:50

Jesus spoke of a baptism that He had to undergo in His life. Until it was accomplished... it would be a great source of stress to Him. (Of course) the baptism He is referring to is His suffering and death on the cross. It loomed in the horizon of His life. The crucifixion was on the Divine schedule and so Christ speaks of this experience as a sure occurrence.

The word “baptized” is from the Greek word *baptizo* {*bap-tid’-zo*} which means “to immerse, to dip.” In the passive verb form it means “to be submerged.” Often it is used metaphorically. For example... it is used of a ship sunk beneath the waves of the sea. “All the waves and billows are over me.” ... Calvary loomed in the future of Jesus. He would be plunged and totally submerged in overwhelming agony and suffering.

With perfect candor... Jesus described the misery that drenched His soul. He wanted to get the ordeal over with...“*how distressed I am until it is completed!*”

What made the waiting so terrible was that He knew exactly what His baptism entailed. His prolonged torture was knowing the absolute necessity of taking on the raw sewage of ALL our sins — that He would choke and drown in it... as the payment of what you and I owe God. ... He KNOWINGLY and WILLINGLY paid our penalty. ... [P A U S E] ...

Luke 12:52-53

The dividing will go as far as to divide family members. ... Generally speaking... we consider family as the closest relationship... and the last to be broken. ... But Christ will be a divider among the families. ... Some of you... listening to me today... can testify to this fact. When you were converted... it created a division in your family... which (up to that point) had been quite close.

But the decision to follow Christ (even though it means painful division) is vitally important. It cannot be ignored. There is nothing else that is more important – even though there are other matters that we foolishly treat with greater significance.

Luke 12:54-56

Jesus gets very firm with these people. They were very capable in discerning the weather. They knew it was going to rain when they saw the clouds in the West that formed over the Mediterranean Sea. They knew it was going to be hot when the winds came out of the South from the Arabian desert. These simple... basic signs... helped them form a conclusion of the weather.

Yet... the most important matters (the spiritual matters)... they could not... or would not discern at all. They could predict a **storm**... but not the coming judgment. They were spiritually blind and ignored the obvious signs in front of them about true identity of Jesus Christ. These folks had failed to realize they were in the age of the Messiah. They would not understand the “times” in which they were living.

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The Jews were in a time of critical decision and importance because their Messiah had arrived and they needed to make a choice to accept or reject Him. Unfortunately... they rejected Him because they would not accept the evidence in front of their face that demanded a positive verdict that He was the Son of God. ... They were hypocrites because they did not honestly evaluate what Christ had done and the prophecies He fulfilled. The different signs that pointed to Christ (that He was their Messiah) were clearly visible... especially to those who walked with God and had a heart for the Lord (such as Anna and Simeon.)

The living God was in their midst. He had told them who He was and why He was there. He had verified His message with miracle after miracle.

Jesus had fulfilled everything the prophets had foretold about the Messiah's first coming. (For example) they had foretold the place where He would be born (Mic. 5:2)... the exact **year** that Messiah would present Himself in the Temple as Messiah (Dan. 9:24–26)... and Messiah's plan of healing the blind... the lame... the deaf... and bringing people back to life (Isa. 42:1–3). Jesus had demonstrated His Messiahship in countless ways. A visit to the archives in the temple would have given documented proof that He was descended from David. (He had the right lineage that the prophets foretold).

But they were blind to it all. ... They were not only blind to what was *apparent* but also blind to what was *approaching* - (their judgment!) ... Trouble comes when we see reality as we wish it would be - **not as it is**.

Luke 12:57

Jesus rebuked these people for their hypocrisy in ignoring the signs that pointed to Christ's deity. Every person must make their **own** decision about the Lord. (Do not think that your family's decision will save you from Hell.) Jesus asked them: "*Why can't you decide for yourselves what is right and true?*"

The Lord proceeded to use a judicial or legal illustration to urge them to make their own decision in making matters right with God.

Luke 12:58-59

Anyone will do whatever is necessary to stay out of prison... but how many people will apply that same concern and diligence to stay out of hell?

We must apply the truths of these two verses to our own lives personally. If we knew a storm was coming... we would prepare for it. ... If we knew an officer was coming to take us to court... we would get a lawyer and try to settle the case out of court. ... (LISTEN!) ... The storm of God's wrath is coming... and the Judge is already standing before the door (ready to enter)... court will soon be in session.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (ESV)

... Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Jesus' message to urgently make matters right with God applies to us today. ... If you do not know Christ as your Savior... you have a sin debt that must be paid. ... The price is ETERNAL death...

Romans 6:23 (ESV)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The only hope for any sinner is to seek Christ's forgiveness and accept His gift of eternal life. Make your choice today!

The intended application of Luke 12:58-59 is this: Be reconciled to God before it is too late. Do not ignore all the evidence of Who Jesus is... and what He has done for you. Receive His free gift of salvation before it is too late – don't reject it.

If you fail to be reconciled with God in this life... you will **never** win your case in the Divine court in eternity. ... The only way of reconciliation with God about your sin is through faith Jesus Christ.

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