

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.
“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 12:24.

Luke 12

⁴⁹“I came to throw fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already ignited. ⁵⁰But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is finished! ⁵¹Do you think that I came to bring peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ⁵²Yes, from now on there will be five divided in one household: 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 her mother-in-law.”



Intro: Is Jesus the anti-family man?

Think about it. Jesus was born of a virgin. He was single. He had no children. He traveled. His work kept Him from settling down and having His own homestead. Today He even says He came to bring fire and division in the family!

We don't like to face family divisions, do we? We might like it on reality TV or TV sitcoms. We might enjoy the gossip of celebrity families in society. We might have an unhealthy interest in friends' and neighbors' dysfunctional families. But we expect more from Jesus, don't we?

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is not trying to tear up families, but today He is honest and up-front. He knows being a Christian isn't easy, because our families don't all accept the truth of the Gospel.

The bottom line is that Jesus wants our hearts and He wants us in His home, even as ...

JESUS DRIVES HIS WORD HOME

I. HE FACED THE FAMILY SINS

Jesus exposes many dangers to Christian faith in the book of Luke. But nothing has hit so close to home. So why was Jesus being so negative?

He was distressed about this “baptism” He must undergo. By Luke chapter 12, Jesus had already been baptized by John. Normally, that means applying water, a washing off of sin, as we do at the font. But sometimes in the Bible a “baptism” is a washing of punishment with pain and blood. In His all-knowing mind, Jesus predicts a future “baptism.”

As Jesus says to two brothers in Mark 10, “*Can you drink the cup I drink or undergo the baptism I am to undergo?*” Jesus knows He will have to suffer and die with His own beaten and bruised body.

We can think of a baptism of sweat and exercise. But no athlete can bring victims back. An athlete may raise money and awareness for future victims, but that's all. Jesus' baptism faced up to the sins of the family. And there have been many. From cheating husbands to multiple wives and concubines; from deception to intentional dysfunction; from unnecessary arguments to charged insults; from domestic abuse to unbiblical divorce; there was a reason for Jesus to face punishment. He may have brought the fire to the family, but the biggest fire was that which He underwent for the family.

By this kind of “baptism” (a washing of punishment with pain and blood), Jesus has brought the dead to life, the sinners to perfection, the sad to happy, the unholy to glory.

II. HE PROFFERS A MORE PROFOUND PEACE

So we can get why Jesus is distressed, but why will there be disunity in the family?

Jesus says He will bring or “throw” fire, but Jesus is not some pyromaniac. Instead, He reserves judgment for Himself. There will be a day of comeuppance and justice for all who have caused problems—inside the family and out.

- “*By the same Word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men,*” 2 Peter 3:7.
- “*I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke,*” Joel 2:30.

But Jesus is not a new lawgiver. The simple fact that He will suffer for sins and live again is a dividing fact. When God sends the truth of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, one of two things happens: either you hate it or you hunger for it.

The truth of the Gospel gives you strong convictions:

- Strong convictions about sin, grace, faith, and holy living.

OR

- Strong convictions about rebelling against the Gospel, earning the way to heaven, or just doing as you please.

Trials, divisions, disunity, personalities fired up against Christianity; or burning hearts aching to hear the Gospel. Some accept it with joy and others reject it with loathing.

But Jesus is not unaware. Jesus saw that coming. The very fact that Jesus predicts this demonstrates that some things are just more important than keeping the peace. Some hot-button issues need to find their way into our family conversations. We cannot let people important to us go without knowing how important Jesus is to them.

If Jesus comes with fire instead of family peace, then how can we call Him the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6)? How can He say, “*My peace I leave with you*” (John 14)? “*Peace be with you*” (John 20)? How can being justified by faith amount to “*peace with God*” (Rom. 5:1)?

Answer: A deep peace with God comes from fighting through a shallow peace with the world and the sinful nature.

Worldly, shallow peace ignores gaping, life-threatening problems. Soul-threatening problems. Would you ignore an addict’s gaping problems? What if someone spoke up during that person’s life?

Happiness. Deep, profound peace.

III. HE WISHED IT HAD ALREADY BEGUN

Jesus wished His fire had already been ignited. It was better in His mind to know where all people stand and go through with it. It’s also better for us in our families to get started and confront those who need Jesus.

Here are three important things we can learn from Jesus’ words:

1. Don’t simply ignore differences in your family. Spiritual, eternal differences. Would you ignore your child playing in a busy intersection? Of course not, that is a life-or-death situation. Same thing—you won’t ignore your child’s sins and unbelief.
2. Discuss the important issues. Our loved ones might not understand the importance of the basics, like sin, grace, and faith. Spiritual discussions about, e.g., sexuality and politics, can be quite a bit

more layered and complicated, and—without understanding the importance of Jesus in sin, grace, and faith—more complicated topics will be harder to tackle.

3. Don't desire family fights. We like to give each other problems, and we hurt the ones we love the most. The sinful nature in each of us wants to win a point and steal the argument. As Paul says, "*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*"

Jesus was distressed when He thought about this. The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4, "*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*" Just like us, Jesus desired unity, but unity which is based in the truth. Jesus knew the reality of sin and that sinners resist unity and drink in dysfunction. But Jesus wanted to change that reality.

Jesus was not **anti**-family. He was **anticipating** His family. He wished it had already begun. Jesus considered it a family thing to suffer. He agreed with His Father to face eternal pain and separation from the Father ... for His family. He could not wait to make us His family. He could not wait to make you part of His church, and he cannot wait to take you into heaven where there is no raging fire, only light and life and family happiness ... and real, deep peace.

In Jesus' name, Amen.
