

Cause for Division

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Tenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Luke 12:49-53. This text goes against the concepts of Jesus bringing peace to the world and the value of family. BUT, it really doesn't. We will explore what the cause of division is in families.

We have hint of what this text is about when it begins the word fire in verse 49. Here fire is associated with judgment and division. Judgment falls on the wicked, who are separated from the righteous.

Fire can either *destroy* or it can *purify*. The fire of God's wrath laid on Jesus will lead to his death and will destroy the power of sin and hell. This fire is first laid on Jesus when he enters the waters of his baptism by John. From his baptism, Jesus stands under the Father's wrath and continues to stand under the Father's wrath until that wrath is satiated in his crucifixion. With every sickness Jesus heals, every sin he forgives, every dead person he raises, Jesus is both releasing creation from its bondage and absorbing into his body all sickness, sin, and death. This is how he puts himself in the position to receive God's wrath against sin. From the moment he steps forward publicly in his baptism as the world's Messiah, this process begins. For this he came. Jesus knows that he is to bear this fiery wrath and eschatological judgment, and his passionate plea (12:50b) expresses his wish that it were already accomplished. Jesus knows that the fullness of God's wrath is yet to fall on him, and he yearns that his substitutionary atonement on the cross would come soon (12:49). (CC p. 522)

Jesus continues to explain to his disciples that their watchful service will be during a time of division. Those who have been baptized into Christ undergo death and resurrection with him (Rom 6:1-4). Thus the hostility they may suffer is a consequence of their baptismal incorporation into Christ.

Although the disciples probably expected opposition—even violent opposition—they anticipated a military victory and subsequent political peace during the Messiah's reign. Jesus would indeed bring about a kingdom of peace, but not the earthly kind His followers envisioned. (TLSB)

Jesus does bring peace on earth for those who are members of his kingdom and who receive his heralds of peace in faith. This peace between God and humanity is made possible because God's wrath against humanity has been placed on Jesus. The theology of the cross brings peace with God and absolves those who are marked with the cross in Baptism (1 Pet 3:21-22), but the cross also brings enmity from the world. Opposition to Jesus may split families, pitting father against son, mother against daughter, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and vice versa, as prophesied in Micah 7:6. (CC p. 525)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when earthly relations cause me to make You and Your kingdom anything less than my first priority, strengthen me and lead me back into the way of life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)