

August 14, 2022  
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 12:49-53 (Hebrews 12:1-3)

JESUS DIVIDES YOU FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 12th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

In our world today, there is often a misconception of who Jesus really is. Many view Him as the soft and cuddly personality who is non-judgmental and gives no offense. This soft Jesus would never criticize someone's sexual preference or lifestyle. He would never condemn your gossip, greed, gluttony, or your personal choice of self-medication and addiction – because He is the tolerant and inclusive Jesus. The fun Jesus. He is the life coach Jesus who imparts wisdom on how to live an abundant and successful life right now. His message is always peace and love.

But this is a false Jesus in which people of any religion – and – even people of no religion can believe. It is a false Jesus to whom anyone can pledge allegiance. It is the false Jesus who has no expectations and makes no demands. It is the false Jesus who says:

**“... *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”* (Isaiah 22:13)**

St Luke records the Words of the real Jesus in our Gospel text this morning. His face is set toward Jerusalem where He has an appointment with death to save mankind from their sins. (cf: Luke 9:53) He says:

***“<sup>49</sup> “I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! <sup>51</sup> Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.”* (cf: Luke 12:49–51)**

Obviously, this is not the soft and cuddly false Jesus but the true Son of God who entered His own creation to save mankind from sin, death, and the grave. His Words are hard to hear – but they are Words that must be heard and must be believed. They are Words meant to keep you focused on the truth of God's Word rather than on the deceptive and misleading words of the world that surround you day in and day out. Words which intend to lead you away from faith in Christ and the certainty of your salvation.

Jesus speaks of fire and Baptism... fire and water. The two elements appear to be opposites and at odds with one another; however, in Christ, the fire and Baptism go together. The both destroy, divide, and refine. The fire is the cross of Jesus. And the Baptism is a baptism in His own blood. His death on the cross kindled the fire of the scandal of the cross.

**“... [it] is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)**

The cross has set the world ablaze and is the cause of division and strife. In His innocent suffering and death Jesus was baptized in His own blood, marking the end of His earthly ministry which began with His water Baptism by John in the Jordan River. (cf: Luke 3:21–22) By placing himself alongside of sinners in Baptism, Jesus carried the sorrows, griefs, and burdens of all mankind, putting them to death on the cross.

In our text, Jesus longs to see the fire kindled and endure the Baptism, but knowing the extent of the coming pain and suffering He wishes it were already finished. But that did not deter Him enduring the cross or despising the shame. (cf: Hebrews 12:2) He knew that the only way to reconcile the division between God and man was by kindling the fire and enduring His bloody Baptism.

Jesus is clear in our text that division is to be expected in families and even within the household of faith. Because of the devil, the world, and mankind’s own sinful flesh, people who identify themselves as Christians will be at war with one another. In a sinful world, it is normal. What is abnormal is the twisted and corrupt human understanding of what God’s Church is supposed to look and sound like in her mission and calling on earth.

The sinful man desires to do what is right in his own eyes. (cf: Judges 17:6; 21:25) But Scripture calls you to set your eyes on Jesus. (cf: Hebrews 12:2) The world tells you to follow your heart, but Jesus says the human heart is full of sin. (cf: Matthew 15:17–18) It is true. Your heart and mine are dead in trespasses and sin. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, (cf: John 3:6) and the desires of the flesh are against the desires of the Holy Spirit. (cf: Galatians 5:17) This is the source of the division between mankind and God, between believer and unbeliever, and even those who call themselves Christian.

In next week’s Gospel we will hear Jesus say:

<sup>24</sup> **“Strive to enter [the Kingdom] through the narrow door.” (Luke 13:24)**

Spoiler alert for next week’s sermon: Jesus’ command to **“strive”** does not mean that it is your responsibility to work your way into the kingdom by your own piety, works, and deeds. No. The striving and struggle by which one enters God’s kingdom is repentance and faith – both which are worked in the human heart by the power of God.

But the sinful old Adam does not want to strive and struggle in repentance and faith. Even among believers. Your old Adam desires the easy way of the world. [sarcasm on →] It says: *“Do not make waves. Be tolerant and approving of others and their sins.”* (cf: Romans 1:32) *“Who needs to endure sound teaching when I can create my own truth and wander off into myths and pleasures of the flesh?”* (cf: 2 Timothy 4:3–4) [←sarcasm off]

Because many believers will not strive and struggle in repentance and faith, it creates division within the family. Your adversary is not always an unknown enemy but your friends and family members who have fallen for the devil’s lies. Sometimes those brothers and sisters who have strayed from God’s pure Word and have been deceived by the subtle teachings of the devil. They

urge or intimidate you to be tolerant and inclusive of false gods and doctrines that lead to eternal damnation. Perhaps you have someone like that in mind right now. But before you attempt to point out the speck in your brother or sister's eye, pull the log out of your own eye meditating on God's Word to ensure that you are not the one who has been deceived or bewitched. (cf: Galatians 3:1)

Test the spirits. Examine your words and actions in light of holy Scripture to determine if they are from God – or if they're from the devil. (cf: 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1) Are you standing upon the rock of God's Word or are you have you fallen for one of the devil's lies? Once God has worked contrition and repentance in your heart, repent. Turn from all your sinfulness, repent, and believe the Gospel. Repent and pray that the Lord would keep you steadfast in His Word.

This is why it is imperative that you daily immerse yourself in God's Word. For:

***"<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*** (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

Search and study God's Word in both Law and Gospel. God's Law strikes down the obvious sinners, the false saints, and the unwitting sinner. His Law drives you to terror and despair. It leads you to true contrition and sorrow of the heart and prepares you to receive the sweetness of the Gospel that Jesus came not to condemn the world but to save poor miserable sinners like you and me.

Jesus' Words are hard to hear – but they are Words that must be heard and must be believed. They are Words meant to keep you focused on the truth of God's Word. God's ultimate purpose is not to divide brothers and sisters in Christ or separate parents from their children. His chief goal is to divide you and me and all mankind from our selfishness and sin, and in doing so, to unite us with Himself and all believers.

A fire must be cast. A baptism must happen. The cross must be suffered and Christ's blood must be shed that all who believe would be saved from the wages of their sin. Jesus speaks these words so that you not lose sight of His work of salvation on your behalf because you would rather not suffer division from the unbelievers and sinful pleasures of the world.

Jesus brought division into the world. The religious leaders who heard Him rejected His message and plotted to kill Him – which separated and divided them from God. Many who heard Jesus' message and believed were divided from family members who did not believe. Jesus was even rejected by His own family in His hometown of Nazareth. (cf: Mark 6:4) But for those who believed, they laid hold of the promise of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.

And this is the Good News in our Gospel text today. Your crucified and resurrected Savior is still causing division. Working through Word and Sacrament, He divides you from your sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. He divides you from false views of the Christian life and distortions of His Word. He forgives you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the

Holy Spirit. Amen. He sends His Holy Spirit to purify and sanctify you and the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In Holy Baptism God the Father united you into Jesus' death and resurrection, making you an heir of all the treasures of heaven. When some members of a family hear and believe, and others do not or are deceived, divisions in the family will inevitably arise. But you, fellow redeemed:

***"... lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and... run with endurance the race that is set before [you], <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of [y]our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*** (Hebrews 12:1–2)

Jesus has already endured every sort of hostility. You won't face anything that He hasn't already suffered. Don't grow weary and fainthearted. Perfected by His sacrificial death, your great High Priest perfects you. He strengthens you to endure in the race with His Gospel Word and His body and blood given and shed for you. Whenever the world celebrates what God's Word condemns, speak the truth in love: teach, reprove, correct and be an example of righteous living to the world. Will it be easy? No! Will it cause division? Yes, it's guaranteed. Jesus said:

***"<sup>13</sup> ... you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."*** (Mark 13:13)

Our society used to beg Christians to tolerate their sinful and immoral ways. Now they demand you bow down before their false gods and idols, and praise and celebrate their evil. Because of your confession the world will demand you lose your job or your business, and lose your goods and reputation. But stand firm on God's Word, for:

***"... what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"***  
(Mark 8:36)

Dear Christian, do not allow divisions among family, friends, and the world to divide you from faith in Jesus and His priceless gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, live a life that is pure, holy and blameless, devoting yourselves to prayer, giving your tithes and offerings and doing good works and deeds. Not that they count toward your salvation, but because it is God good and gracious will for your life.

The Son of God left the glory of heaven so He could endure the fire of God's wrath on your behalf, atoning for your sin, reconciling you with the Father. For the sake of Jesus, you have assurance knowing He has made peace between you and the Father. He divides you from your selfishness and sin, and most especially, divides you from death unto eternal life.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.