

## Luke 12:49-59

### “Dividing, Discerning, Deciding”

Being ready for the return of Christ; it's of paramount importance. It's not something you want to be uncertain *of* or unprepared *for* because mark my words (or better yet mark Jesus' words), "...the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." "Therefore" Jesus said, "Be Ready". How are you to do that? #1 *Give your life to Him*, if you've never surrendered your heart, your life unconditionally to Jesus Christ you're not ready for His return. That's the very 1<sup>st</sup> step. Realize that He shed His blood, that He laid down His life upon the altar of the cross for your sin. He paid your penalty so that by God's grace through faith in Him you could be forgiven of your sin and made right in His sight. He'll give you the robe of His righteousness for the rags of your sin. That's where it begins, # 1 *Give your life to Him*, #2 *Live your life for Him*.

We're to be waiting *on* Him, watching *for* Him, and working as *unto* Him; we're to be busy about the work of the Lord. Now is not the time to grow spiritually sluggish, to believe that you've got plenty of time because every day brings us closer to *that* day when we'll stand before our Lord and we'll give an account of our lives. If we want to hear, "Well done good and faithful servant" than we need to be doers of the word of God; you can't hear well *done* if you don't *do* anything. Being *done* with something implies you *did* something. If you don't in any way *serve* the Lord how can you hope to hear *from* the Lord, "Well done"?

Ok, so we need to be serving Jesus, living our lives *for* Jesus. Now if there's one thing I've discovered *about* Jesus it's that He changes people's lives, amen? Christ will impact your life, He will make a difference in your life and people, your friends and your family will notice. Now that may be a good thing, but it might also be a bad thing... "What's that?" Yeah, oh not a bad thing ultimately, eternally, but practically/presently because when you receive Jesus as your Master, your Savior and you surrender your life to the purchase price of His blood on your behalf yet that friend, that family member doesn't... it can create some problems. One thing you can count on with Jesus is that He will never pull punches, He will always be incredibly upfront and transparent. Therefore He tells us quiet candidly, very clearly that due to Him there could very possibly be a *dividing* that takes place in your life; that's Vs 51-53. Vs 49-50? They deal with the way Jesus desires to impact humanity, and humanities impact on Jesus, notice.

#### Vs 49-50

It's kind of interesting to me that in Vs 49 Jesus speaks of fire, in Vs 50 He speaks of water (baptism); Vs 49 is how He will affect the world, Vs 50 is how the world will affect Him... What does He mean by, "I came to send fire on the earth."

Some have suggested that it's a picture of judgment; and I suppose it may be but my difficulty with that perspective is that Jesus says, "I wish it were already kindled" yet we know according to 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter Ch 3:9, that the Lord isn't *impatient* with us, seeking to expedite judgment. But rather He's *longsuffering/patient* with us not being willing (wanting) that *any* should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Remember when John the Baptist was prophesying, preparing the people for the arrival of Jesus? He said, *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* Matt 3:11 Speaking of the ministry of the Holy Spirit that would be unleashed in our lives igniting us, setting us ablaze for Jesus Christ Refining us, purifying us, empowering us to serve the Lord appropriately. Now that’s a fire that I can see Jesus looking forward to, wishing it were already happening in people’s lives.

Question: is it happening in your life? Have you received Jesus Christ, have you been set on fire *by* Jesus Christ are you serving Him, is the Holy Spirit refining you, purifying you, using you to impact people’s lives for the Lord? Or are you more along the lines of spiritually cold and indifferent toward the things of God; compromised and semi-callused toward the things of the Spirit? Jesus came to set you on fire, to purify your life and use you for His glory; He wants you to know Him and to make Him known. Now’s not the time for spiritual apathy/lethargy, now’s the time to seek/serve the Lord diligently, now’s the time for you and me to decrease that He might increase in our lives, seek Him for it. *“God pour out Your Spirit upon me; have Your way in me completely!”*

But something needed to happen before Jesus could pour out His Spirit upon believing humanity and He references that in Vs 50 and that is this; as long as He was here physically the Holy Spirit wouldn’t be poured out liberally. Leave Luke Ch 12 and look quickly at John 16, drawing your attention specifically beginning in Vs 5 (-15).

You see before the Holy Spirit would *come* Jesus needed to *go away*. But before Jesus “went away” that is, before He would ascend into heaven He would 1<sup>st</sup> suffer the death of the cross for the sin of the world, be buried and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day rise again. He had a “baptism” to be baptized with. He had an appointment with the cross. The fact that Jesus speaks of His suffering as a “baptism” tells us something; He wasn’t “sprinkled” with suffering, He was immersed in agony; the waters of affliction and the wrath of God toward sin flowed completely over Him.

He identified *in totality* with sinful humanity, even so when we’re baptized into Christ; baptized with the Holy Spirit it’s not a “sprinkling” of the Spirit, a bit of an identification with Christ; we’re immersed and overflowing, identified with Him fully; we belong to Him completely. We’ve been bought at the purchase price of His blood and we are not our own...

Salvation may be free, but it’s definitely not cheap...it cost God dearly, *“...how distressed I am till it is accomplished!”* Why? 2 reasons; Jesus knew that His death would bring us life; He was committed *to* it, wanted to go through *with* it. Yet on the flip side He was not only fully God, He was fully Man; He would be separated from His Father for the 1<sup>st</sup> and only time throughout eternity.

Jesus knows what it means to suffer stress and be burdened with something that seems overwhelming. Read Luke 22 sometime, you’ll find Him there agonizing in the Garden on the eve of the cross sweating great drops of blood. Now, when was the last time you were under such stress that the capillaries in your forehead burst and you sweat as it were great drops of blood?

He is a High Priest for you and for me who (Heb 4:15) sympathizes with our weaknesses and is acquainted with our suffering...so we can come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. He identifies with you completely, He understands you precisely therefore is able to minister to you and your needs specifically/compassionately...

Vs 51-53

Allow me to speak frankly with you; Jesus *is not* nor *will He be* the end of your problems; to the contrary in many ways having Christ in your life only invites *more* problems. Jesus many times brings a *dividing* to our lives. I have discovered that often times Christ is preached as if to say if Jesus is *in* your life you will *lead* a life that's primrose and problem free...that's not true. Jesus *never* sought to purport that. As a matter of fact He said things like, "*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*" Matt 7:13-14 Jesus never claimed to be the ez way; He said He was the *only* way, but the way is *difficult*; it doesn't cater to our flesh. It comes with trials, tribulations, turbulence and tough times. Jesus was very clear, "*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" John 16:33 Paul underscored these things when he said, "*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*" 2 Tim 3:12 So in the words of the apostle Peter, "*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*" 1 Peter 4:12

Problems are part and parcel with the Christian life; at times the problem will be a dividing of the closest relationships; even the blood bond of families or the ties of the closest friends. You see you're *in* the world, but you're not *of* the world therefore the world has problems with you. If you were of the world the world would love you, but light and darkness just don't see eye to eye on things. There's a *collision* of sorts that takes place between light and darkness and one or the other have to give, they can't co-exist. So when you're light; you've accepted to Christ, yet members of your family have rejected Christ there's going to be a collision of sorts.

There's going to be a difference of conviction; of perspective and it'll cause problems... because you can't compromise. The primary purpose of Christ coming to the earth wasn't peace at any price; it was to die for the sins of the world. Now, you can have peace; Jesus will give you peace, but it's not peace with man...it's peace with God. The bible says, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" Rom 5:1 Again, "*For it pleased the Father that in Him [Christ] all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*" Col 1:19-20 So you can be at peace with the world, or at peace with God, but one necessarily creates a division with the other. Jesus creates a dividing line; for Him...or against Him, there is no neutral ground.

But that's why Jesus said that we're to count the cost when it comes to following Him; because it will cost you to commit your life to Christ; but ultimately/eternally it will cost you much, much more if you don't. But know in advance that your loyalty to Christ *must take precedence* over any other loyalty on this earth... You've got to be able to count "all things loss" (Phil 3:8) for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord...

Now don't misunderstand this, Jesus isn't saying that we're to disown our families. He's making us aware of the fact that sometimes following Him will result in extreme conflict, your family might (and many have) disown you. When light and darkness meet, conflict occurs...

Ok...Not only is there a dividing, there also needs to be some discerning and deciding as well, notice...

Vs54-56

Here's the thought, the people (as a nation) aren't receiving Jesus; they're rejecting Him. They're not really discerning Him for who He is. He says in essence, "It's unbelievable that you can predict and discern practical matters like the weather by a simple cloud in the western sky or a southerly wind, yet with thousands of yrs worth of prophecies and the scriptures in your care you can't see the Son of God standing right in front of your face!"

They could sense a storm coming, but they couldn't discern the spiritual climate, the judgment on the horizon due to their rejecting of the Christ. You see Jesus was fulfilling Messianic prophecies left and right and they couldn't see it, they were unable to discern it. The scripture dictated *where* Christ would be born (Micah 5:2), *when* He would come (Daniel Ch 9), that He would be called out of Egypt, be born of a virgin, what He would do while He was here, the way He would enter into Jerusalem on the day of His "unveiling" (if you will [Zech 9:9]), that He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, suffer the crucifixion, rise from the dead; over 300 prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus at His 1<sup>st</sup> coming. They weren't connecting the dots...

They could sense a climate change with little to no resources; but couldn't discern the Christ in their midst with hundreds of prophecies at their disposal in the scriptures.

Now, it's ez to sit some 2,000+ yrs removed and criticize their lack of discernment concerning the 1<sup>st</sup> coming of Christ. But I wonder how much better we're doing discerning the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ?

You can create your own illustration, maybe you're awesome at predicting the stock market; you can listen to a car drive down the road and know what's wrong with it, you can hear a song, pick up your instrument and with in minutes being playing it back. Today we can tell you when Hailey's comet will visit our orbit, split atoms and put people on the moon...people know how to get to the stars but they don't know how to get to heaven; we have an enormous wealth of scientific knowledge but very little spiritual wisdom.

They didn't discern the 1<sup>st</sup> coming of Christ and unfortunately very few will discern the days of His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Yet the bible is equally replete with what we're to look for, what signs "set the stage" and believe you me it's all in place. Israel is a nation again after being scattered for 2,000 yrs, the world economy is in the tank preparing us for a global currency, a cashless society and someone (a political, economic "superman" [A.C.]) who can get us out of this mess. Efforts to make a 1 world religion are constantly gaining momentum under the banner of "open-mindedness."

On a practical level what does the bible say about the climate of the last days? Leave Luke 12, look at 1 Tim 3 (1-5)... Sounds like your local evening news doesn't it? Read Matt 24 on your own time. Jesus there speaks of the earthquakes, famines, pestilences, wars that will be on the up-rise and increase; He says that people will be going on in life like business as usual; eating, drinking, marrying, being given in marriage; there will be a false sense of security based on ignorance... What'd ya think? Sound like where we live? It does to me. The world's knowledge is increasing *technologically*, but is still in the dark *theologically*; we can discern the skies but not the things of the Spirit.

Vs 57-59

Here's the point; we need to be discerning and we need to be deciding; deciding to do the right thing based upon what we're discerning.

Now certainly this passage has relevance to common sense interaction with people how we as believers should regard the courts. We need to do everything we can to avoid placing ourselves under the judgment of a secular system; look for an out of court settlement if and when at all possible.

BTW we realize here that Jesus calls us to "judge" what's right; to realize that there are moral absolutes that need to be upheld. Relativism is absurd and only works in the world of someone's unaccountable fantasy land. It doesn't fly in real life.

"Well that might be right for you, but not for me..." Really...tell that to the judge when you're on trial for murder, or rape, or stealing, or drunken belligerence; "Well judge, murder may not be right for you, but it was for me...so it's not right to hold your standard on me." He's going to be like, "Whatever, you're going to jail and you just might receive capital punishment." Relativism doesn't hold water; there are moral absolutes. Who determines the moral absolutes? Who decides what a vessel will be created for? The Master Potter, we're God's creation, He gives us in His word the absolutes we abide by...

But Jesus says here, "You should be discerning, and through that you should be deciding what is right and acting upon that."

Here's the application based upon the observation of these last 2 Vs. The given in the text is that the one being taken to court is in the wrong; that's why Jesus says, "Make every effort to settle before you stand before the judge; because when the sentence is handed down it won't be good for you."

If you sense, if you can see that Jesus is coming soon, and you know that humanity will stand *before* God and be judged *by* God than you do well to do everything you can do to get an “out of court settlement” and reconcile the issue before you stand before the Judge. There’s an offer that’s been made; a “settlement” (if you will) that you can receive prior to coming into the “court” and should you receive that settlement the case is closed. Because believe me “defendant” you don’t have a good case, you’re guilty and the judgment will be found against you...So if you’re wise you’ll make peace with God prior to ever standing before Him.

People will go to great extent (and understandably so) to stay out of jail; but how many people apply that same concern and diligence to staying out of hell? Jesus says, “Make every effort to settle along the way,” well here you are, “along the way” and it’s another opportunity to “settle”, to be reconciled to God through the cross of Jesus Christ As the bible says, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Cor 6:2

Be wise; and make peace *with* God and receive the peace that comes *from* God; if you know the Lord yet you know in your own heart that you’ve *strayed* from God; reconcile today; confess your sin and find forgiveness today. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.

Discern the times to which you’ve been called; and decide to run this race well...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:13-14

#### Prayer Points:

Father help us to be wise concerning the times to which You’ve called us to live, that we might be a light in this dark world. That we might run this race well; that we might count the cost and be committed to You whole heartedly, uncompromisingly. Help us to be students of Your word, discerning the days; the spiritual climate that surrounds us that we might be ready (Jesus) for Your return.

If you’re not ready for His return you can be today, right here, right now before we leave this place. God is calling out *to* you, He wants peace *with* you, He’s placed the ball in your court, He’s made the way, He’s provided the settlement; He’s offered to settle out of court; to reconcile and make peace with you through the blood of Jesus Christ It’s up to you to accept the offer, or reject the offer and make your own case. The problem is that we’re all guilty and have no way to justify ourselves before God...there’s only one way to have our sin debt erased before God and that’s through faith in Jesus Christ Why resist it, why reject it, receive Jesus today.