

SERMON FOR AUGUST 14, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 12: 49-53

THEME: WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

49 “I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! **50** But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! **51** Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; **52** for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. **53** They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

In the name of Jesus:

Eyesight is a precious gift from God. When you can't see what is in front of you, things can get difficult in a hurry. Many years ago I was driving on a road behind a dump truck filled with stone and rock. You can guess what happened, the truck hit a bump in the road, stones came tumbling out and despite my best efforts to avoid the debris, a few stones hit my windshield, shattering it so that I could not see going forward. I had to roll down my window to look out the driver's side window in order to make it home. Fortunately for me, I was close to home and was able to make it home safely. But the lesson is simple, if you can't see clearly, going forward is going to be difficult.

That isn't the only time I have had problems seeing out a front windshield. You probably, like me, have had mud splashed on your

windshield when driving, or maybe you had to pull over to the side of the road in the midst of a driving rainstorm. When the vision is clouded, life becomes more difficult. You will do all you can to see clearly once again.

So it is with your faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says that now we look through a mirror dimly. There are questions that we have that we want answered. Why do bad things happen? Does God love me? Does He know my name? What does He want from me, what does He want me to do with my life? These questions, among others, are questions that we want answered.

But we can't find the answers to these questions, at least, not in and of ourselves. Sin clouds our vision of God. And so we ask the questions but we can't find the answers. At least, not within us or any other human being. Philosophers will ask the questions concerning life and its meaning, but all the philosopher does is ask questions, he doesn't come up with answers. Just more and more questions. So where can we know for certain who God is, what His will is for us?

That is why God has given to us the Bible, His Holy Word. In the Bible God speaks, clearly, in words, in our language. In His Law God tells us right from wrong. Don't do this. Do that. Love the Lord your God with all your might. Love your neighbor as yourself. Be perfect, as the Lord is perfect.

In the past, God spoke through prophets. But now, He speaks to you and me through Jesus His Son. The Bible says that in many and in various ways God spoke to His people of old but now in these last days, He has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus. Jesus is God's Word to you. In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God, in and through Him, Jesus, all things were made, and in Jesus God speaks to us the truth of His love, forgiving sinners who believe in His Son.

That is why the writer to the Hebrews says this: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus." Jesus is God's answer to what ails us. Throughout the Old Testament, God pointed people to the future, to believe that God, in time and history, send a Savior to save the world from sin, Satan, and death. And the Old Testament people, that is to say, the ones who were believers, had faith in God's promises. They believed that God would keep His promises. They therefore lived their lives by faith.

One of the great chapters of the Bible is found in the New Testament, in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, it is commonly known as the Faith chapter of the Bible. In this chapter, the writer lauds the people of faith, and there are plenty of examples to show how God's people lived by faith. Men and women of faith are listed: Abraham, who was at first a pagan, but God called him to follow. Abraham believed in God and God counted him righteous. Abraham

was told to go and leave homeland, family, and friends and go to a land that God would show him. And Abraham followed, he trusted in God, he lived by faith. When Abraham and Sarah were old, past their child bearing years, God promised to them a child. God made good on His promise, Abraham and Sarah lived by faith. The list goes on and on in Hebrews 11: Moses led the people out of captivity, trusting in God, Moses lived by faith. Gideon, when called to fight the Mideanites, was told to take only a fraction of the men he figured he would need to fight, Gideon learned to trust in God, Gideon lived by faith. David, when facing the prospects of battling the giant called Goliath, put aside the military garb and took a slingshot and a few stones to slay the enemy, David lived by faith. Time and time again God's people were taught to not to look at their own strength and power but to trust and rely on the Lord. He is your ever present Help in times of trouble. The righteous live by faith! In spite of, and in the face of ridicule, opposition, mocking and abuse, God's people fixed their eyes on Jesus, who was God's promised One to fight their battles and win the war.

And this is just what Jesus has done, for you, for me, for all. Listen to what Jesus says: **49** "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! **50** But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! **51** Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on

earth? I tell you, no, but rather division” All of humanity has been held captive in the grip of sin, Satan, and death. All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. No one is right with God. So Jesus came to make all things right. He was baptized in the Jordan to take your place in the battle against sin, Satan, and death. Jesus came to declare war on evil and to defeat evil. And so Jesus went to Jerusalem, to the cross, to drink the cup of wrath that the Father poured out on Him, so that by His life, suffering and death, the price to make you a child of God would be paid on the cross. Jesus declared victory in His glorious resurrection, achieving victory over all evil for those who believe in Christ. This victory is yours by faith. This victory has been given to you in Baptism.

And now, Jesus has placed you on His side. He has called you by name in the waters of Baptism. You belong to Him. And He has given to you an overwhelming victory over sin, Satan, and death. He calls you to live by faith. How do you live by faith? By fixing your eyes on Jesus, by having Jesus as the focus in your life. How does that happen? It isn't a coincidence. It is intentional. Just as Jesus had a determination to do whatever it took to make you His child, by battling Satan, being victorious in the face of temptation, by trusting in His Father for all things, and by offering up Himself for you as the perfect payment for your sins, now God gives you a new opportunity to live for

Jesus. Remember that you are baptized! Remember what God has done for you in Baptism. You belong to Him. He has given to you faith in Christ. Daily He gives you the opportunity to live for Jesus.

So repent. Turn from sin and trust in God. As the Apostle Paul says: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12: 1-3).

Jesus speaks clearly as to what this looks like in our text for today. There is a dividing line in life. If you love father or mother more than Jesus, you aren't worthy of Him. If you love son or daughter more than Jesus, you are worthy of Him. It shouldn't come as a surprise of what the implications may be for those who love God first above all things.

But Jesus loved you more than anything. He died and rose so that you might live. He gives you new life in Baptism, He has forgiven you all of your sins. The Bible says: He is on your side, so you can confidently say, the Lord is my Helper! So what is your response? May you say as Joshua did: as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!

Amen