

SERMON FOR JUNE 26, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 9:51-56

THEME: SONS OF THUNDER

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. **52** And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. **53** But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. **54** And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" **55** But he turned and rebuked them. **56** And they went on to another village.

In the name of Jesus:

There are nicknames, and then there are nicknames. Nicknames that show fondness, and nicknames that show disdain. Sometimes a nickname can be cutting, and other times it can be revealing. In the case of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, they had nicknames that revealed their character, nicknames that summed up their personalities.

In the Gospel of Mark, we see that Jesus gave these two disciples a nickname. Mark writes: "(there were) James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder)." What a nickname, what a moniker to carry with you! Sons of Thunder! The name would reveal that they were quick to judge, had a short fuse, and were ready to go off on a person at a moment's notice. James and

John were Sons of Thunder, and we see their personalities showing in our text for today.

Luke records that when the time was drawing near to when Jesus was about to be crucified, Jesus was even more determined to go to Jerusalem where He would face denial, rejection, judgment, where He would suffer and die for the sins of all. At some point before this time Jesus sent messengers ahead of him, and they went to a village of the Samaritans, in order to prepare a place for Jesus to stay. But Luke notes that when the people of Samaria did not receive him, Jesus went on His way and continued on His journey to Jerusalem.

Now if you know anything about the Jews and the Samaritans, you would realize that these two groups mixed like oil and water. They had a long history. The Jewish historian Josephus writes that it was commonplace for Samaritans to mistreat Jewish pilgrims on their way to worship in Jerusalem, to the point that sometimes the Samaritans would occasionally resort to murdering these Jewish pilgrims. Knowing this sheds light, not only on the story of the Good Samaritan, as to why the Good Samaritan happened to be an enemy of the one he stopped to help, but sheds light on our text for today. The Samaritans were no friends of the Jews, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that when Jesus wished to stop there He was rejected. But note this, Jesus wanted

to stop there, He desired to stay with the known enemy at the time, the Samaritans, because Jesus loves all. Even though Jesus reached out to those who were considered the enemy, His overtures were rejected. .

So when Jesus' disciples, James and John, saw how Jesus was treated, how He was rejected, the Sons of Thunder reverted to form, and were ready to call down fire from heaven upon those who rejected Jesus. Luke says: that when James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" And Jesus' response? **55** But he turned and rebuked them. **56** And they went on to another village. Note this, that when the Sons of Thunder were ready to call down God's wrath from heaven, Jesus turned and rebuked them. They didn't get a pat on the back. They didn't get a 'well done good and faithful servant' from Jesus. Jesus admonished them. He rebuked them. They stood corrected. Jesus was having none of it. Jesus came to save sinners, not to condemn them.

Yes, the condemnation will come, in time, but in God's time. On the Last day Jesus will come and He will judge the living and the dead. Those who believe in Jesus will rise to eternal life, and those who have rejected Jesus will then receive their reward of punishment. But what Jesus is saying to the Sons of Thunder, and to you and me, is this, Judgment Day is coming, but today isn't that day. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the call to repentance, the day

to call sinners to Jesus, not to call God's wrath upon them. James and John needed to learn the difference, and they eventually did. And we need to learn that lesson today as well.

We live in horribly combative times, when things are politically charged and people are deeply polarized. Today you rarely see people respectfully disagreeing with one another. Instead of reason and patient reflection, differing opinions will bring out rage, and when there is disagreement you will see people dealing with one another with a type of scorched earth contempt. That is how James and John reacted to those who disagreed with them and with those who wouldn't treat Jesus with respect. And how did Jesus react to this scorched earth type of response? Jesus turned and rebuked them, He rebuked them just as He rebuked the unclean spirit earlier where we read that as they were bringing a demon possessed boy to Jesus," the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. **43** And all were astonished at the majesty of God." (Luke 9).

Yes, James and John understood that to reject Jesus invited God's judgment. And that will come, at the proper time, but now is not that time. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the time to invite all to believe. God's majesty and greatness is seen in this: that God in love sent His only Son Jesus

into the world, to live, suffer, die, and rise again for sinners. Christ came not to condemn the world but to save it. That is why Jesus invites all to come to Him, for He has the living waters of life, whoever believes in Jesus, even though he may die in this life, will live forever with Christ.

His call to each of us is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and life. We show our love for God in how we treat others, by loving our neighbor as ourselves.

The sons of Thunder were changed by the love of Christ, so much so that they went on to live their lives for Christ, loving Him by showing love for others. Listen to how John puts it in his first letter, 1 John 4: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.”

John was changed from a person calling down the wrath of God upon his enemies, to one who showed love to all. And that is your calling and mine

today. We live in troubling times, in a culture and a world that is hostile to Christ and the Gospel. We are called not to win an argument, rather we are called to love others even as Jesus loves us. And when we love one another, we fulfill His command, allowing Him to change hearts and lives so that many more will believe and follow Him all of the days of their lives.

To the glory of God and in Jesus name.

Amen