

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Seventh Sunday After trinity, July 10, 2016

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 16, 26:6, 446, 444, 444:4.

Lessons: Isaiah 53:3-8, Revelation 7:9-17, John 5:19-29.

Sermon Text: Luke 12:49-57.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ our Savior, dear friends:

These are strange sounding words from our Savior's lips! He speaks about coming to this earth to send fire on the earth. He says that he did not come to bring peace on earth, but division. It is good for us that we hear these strange sounding words because it attracts our attention and sets us to thinking about important spiritual matters.

It is also good that we have these words of our text before us to remind us that we should prepare for his second coming at the end of days.

May the Lord help us in this preparation as we consider:

JESUS' WARNINGS FOR THESE LAST DAYS

- 1. Believers should be aware of the division that always follows the preaching of the cross; and,**
- 2. People in general need to have a better understanding of their spiritual needs**

Jesus speaks of the purpose of his coming to this earth: ***"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"*** The fire Jesus speaks of is the fire of controversy that came on earth when he came here in the flesh to suffer and die. When the testimony concerning Christ is heard as the Gospel is preached, a great commotion results, the fire of controversy, that brings about division on earth, not peace.

This is what Jesus foretold in the words of our text. But first Jesus had a baptism to undergo. He says: ***"But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!"*** Jesus was not referring to his baptism by John the Baptist. That had already taken place when he spoke the words of our text. He was speaking of a baptism of suffering and death that was to be poured out on him. A similar expression was used by Jesus when James and John requested to sit at his right and left hand in his kingdom of glory. Jesus replied: ***"You don't know what you are asking... Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"*** Mark 10:38 (NIV) He was asking if they were willing and able to endure the suffering and death he had to suffer. In rebuking them for their lack of humility, the Lord also said: ***"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*** Mark 10:45 (NIV) Jesus came to this earth to give up his life for sinners, to suffer and to die. As Isaiah said, ***"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering."*** Isaiah 53:3 (NIV) And the suffering ended in death, as Isaiah also said: ***"For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken."*** There would be terrible suffering when the Lord would lay on Jesus the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6) Being fully aware of this terrible suffering and death for the sins of all mankind, Jesus as a true man was greatly distressed. In our text he says: ***... "how distressed I am until it is completed!"*** One cannot really imagine the great distress that Jesus suffered looking ahead to his death on the cross. But we get a good idea of that pressure upon him when we observe him in the Garden of Gethsemane. There in the garden, we are told ***"he began to be deeply distressed and troubled."*** Mark 14:33 (NIV) There he pleaded with his heavenly father: ***"Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*** Mark 14:36 (NIV) There his sweat was

like drops of blood falling to the ground. He knew what terrible suffering also was ahead for him on the cross, when he had to suffer the full wrath of God because of the sins of all people on earth.

That suffering and death of Jesus had such a good purpose, for the Gospel says: ***“Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”*** 1 Peter 3:18 (NIV) But when the Gospel which tells of his suffering, death and resurrection is preached, and people are told that this is how their sins are paid for, and that by believing in the crucified Savior they get to heaven, then the greatest commotion is begun and deep division results on this earth. This is what Jesus is speaking of when he says in our text: ***“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.”*** These words of Jesus should really cause us to perk up our ears and listen carefully. At Christmas we have it dinned in our ears that Jesus came to bring about outward peace on earth. Indeed, when Isaiah spoke of the coming Savior, he called him the ***“Prince of Peace.”*** Isaiah 9:6 When Jesus was born, the angels sang that there would be ***“on earth peace.”*** Luke 2:14 And that is true in the highest and most wonderful sense. Jesus by his suffering and death paid for man’s sins and thus reconciled God and sinners and made peace between them. Paul says: ***“when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.”*** Romans 5:10 (NIV)

But when this precious truth of the Gospel is proclaimed, most people do not accept it. They do not want the free gift of salvation won by Christ. They want to earn their own way to heaven by their attempts at doing good. And at Christmas time the angel’s message at Jesus’ birth is twisted to mean that men should show their good will to others by giving gifts and doing good works, whereas the angels sang of God’s good will to sinners in sending the Savior. Others pay no attention to the Gospel message and thus reject it in unbelief.

Because the Gospel is rejected, there is deep division, not peace on earth. There is controversy, strife, dissension, that divides even the most intimate family relationships. Jesus says: ***“From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. 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.”***

This deep division will result simply because some do not believe the Gospel of Christ. We should not be surprised at this, since Jesus foretells it very clearly in our text. Paul also speaks of what happens when the message of the cross is preached. Most reject it. He says: ***“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV) Therefore, when there is division and strife, lack of peace, we should not be offended or ashamed to be a part of the Father’s little flock. Rather we should say with Paul: ***“I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”*** Romans 1:16 (NIV) Likewise we should not be deceived by the many false prophets who preach about a millennium, a 1000 year golden age when all is peace and glory for the church. Our Savior says just the opposite will be the case in the last days. That is why Paul also says: ***“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”*** Acts 14:22 (NIV)

In this divided world where many rage against Christ and his Gospel Word, what side are we on? We want to learn from our text that people in general need to have a better understanding of their spiritual needs.

2.

Jesus spoke to the Jews in general in the final part of our text, and his words apply to people in general today also. ***“He said to the crowd: ‘When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, “It’s going to rain,” and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, “It’s going to be hot,” and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time? Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right?’”*** The Jewish people in general did not understand the new era began when Jesus came among them, though Jesus preached that he was sent to proclaim ***“the year of the Lord’s favor.”*** Luke 4:19 They were very good at interpreting signs in the sky and foretelling what kind of weather would come. But they lacked the spiritual understanding of why Jesus came to this earth, and so rejected him in unbelief. They would not accept Jesus of Nazareth as their promised Messiah because he did not meet their own expectations of what the Messiah would accomplish. They were concerned about redemption from the Roman government, but not redemption for their souls lost in sin. Even though Jesus came with many proofs in miracles that he was the Son of God, they rejected him in unbelief. Even though ***“he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law”*** Matthew 7:29 (NIV) they still refused

to listen. The Jews, therefore, ended up with a majority of people who practiced what we might call a religion of religious superficiality, something superficial, on the surface only. They put the emphasis on outward ceremonies and works of the law, but had no faith in Jesus as their Savior.

Is it not so also with many people today? They have a religion of religious superficiality. For them going to church is a social get-together. They're interested in outward ceremonies, nice buildings, beautifully robed choirs and clergy, but they have little interest in doctrine and teaching and learning God's Word. So also the urgency of hearing the Gospel of Christ in these last days is forgotten in their emphasis on outward things. This is what we should think of when we hear Jesus ask: ***"How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?"***

This is no time for staying away from church, but a time when we ought to be most interested in hearing what our Lord has to say to us. This is no time for indifference to the preaching of the Gospel. With Paul we also say: ***"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."*** 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NIV)

This is no time for religious superficiality. We must not put the emphasis on learning worldly wisdom for this life and then neglecting the heavenly wisdom which makes us wise unto salvation. Jesus also asks: ***"Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?"*** Yes, we are to be judgmental (as the saying goes). We are to make moral judgments based on what God has revealed in his Word, and then live a sanctified life to the glory and honor of God.

What about our spiritual understanding in these last days? Spiritual understanding is not dependent on our intelligence. It is a gift of God which the Holy Spirit alone can give through the faithful use of the Word of God. May the Lord give us that spiritual understanding so that we heed these exhortations: ***"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."*** Colossians 3:2 (NIV) ***"Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."*** Ephesians 5:15-17 (NIV)

May the Lord give us a spiritual understanding through his Gospel Word, so that we may live to his honor and glory here, and live with him in heaven to all eternity. Amen.

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