

Dear Friends in Christ,

Have you ever asked yourself why it is that God's name and Jesus' name are profusely profaned, but the names of the gods created by this world (the ones with a little "g") and their earthly representatives are not? Ever ask yourself that question? Have you ever heard anyone cry out "Oh, for Confucius sake!" or "Oh, for Buddha's sake!" or "Oh, for Mohammed's sake!"? Or, how about something along the line of "Oh my Gautama Buddha!"? Of course, the acronym would read OMG...B!

Don't you find it amazing that the entertainment industry would rant for its freedom of speech when it comes to mocking and trashing Jesus and Christians? Isn't it phenomenal that celebrity is listened to and people clamor after such because they're...they're...what?

Don't you find it disturbing that most people go to church because of programs and entertainment? I cannot remember - ever - hearing someone, or someone who decided to leave this congregation, say "I go to such and such church" or "I am going to such and such church because the Word of God is preached and taught in its truth and entirety, without compromise!" I've never heard anything close to that.

I say that these are among a number of insights to be considered in light of . . .

### **THE COMING FIRE THAT CANNOT BE EXTINGUISHED!**

#### **I. Hard Words.**

The text for this morning is a hard one, isn't it? But understand, it is the appointed Gospel lesson for this morning. "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!" (v. 49). That's Judgement Day. Commentator Victor Prange writes of Jesus' wish that "it were already kindled": "he would like to get it over with since it is so dreadful to contemplate." (People's Bible Commentary, "Luke", CPH, p. 152).

Do you think about it? Give it thought? Difficult, isn't it, because of all the distractions that are hypnotizing everyone - including the church in America. Well, Peter says, "scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming?'" (2 Peter 3:3-4). Come on, we've got things to do!

Consider this: Peter says, "But the day of the Lord (Judgment Day) will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." (1 Pet. 3:10). And Jesus says, "how I wish it were already kindled!" So, tell me, what of this earth might you find distracting from that Day? Peter puts the question this way: "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?"

Are you happy? Really happy? What does it mean to be happy? What makes you happy? Peter says, "...we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (2 Pet. 3:13b). Are we - Looking forward to "new heavens and a new earth" more than anything of this world? Does contemplating that make you....happy?

## II. "A Baptism to be Baptized With."

And Jesus says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!" (v. 50). Christ's baptism is His suffering and death for the sin of the World.

Brothers and sisters, it is the theme of all Scripture starting with this Word of God to Satan concerning the Lord Jesus - this from Genesis 3: "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (v15b). The bruising of Christ's heel would be at Calvary. The bruising of Satan's head would be the words of Jesus: "It is finished!" And this from Isaiah 53: "...he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." (v5). And you'll recall what Simeon said to Mary concerning Jesus: "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many...and for a sign that is opposed..." (Lk. 2:34). And Jesus repeatedly informed His disciples: "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." (Lk. 9:44).

It takes a lot of self-willed ignorance, a lot of denial and a lot of Scripture twisting to dismiss Jesus as anything less than what Scriptures proclaim Him to be: Not someone who comes to make this world a wondrous place and give us what we want, but - as John said: "...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Yours. Mine.

Again, Jesus said, "how great is my distress." According to His human nature He was bearing every sin of every human. And He would bear the punishment. He would receive the fulness of hell - what we deserve - so we would never have to face it! If I would preach that in most churches today - well - that would be the end!

## III. Not Peace but Division!

And, finally, Jesus says:

"Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, 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 her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

P. E. Kretzmann sums this up perfectly and in a way that is mostly lost on the church at this moment in time:

The baptism of His last great Passion looms up before Him with such a threatening aspect that He is pressed on every side... And so the disciples must not live in the foolish hope and idea that they will escape the same or similar ordeal. Contention, dissension, strife, enmity will follow the preaching of the cross at all times, causing divisions even in the midst of closely knit households. Friendships of long years standing, the most intimate ties of blood-relationship have been disrupted because of opposition to the Gospel. This the believers of all times should know, lest they be offended. They dare not expect their lot to be more pleasant than that of their Lord. (P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, New

Testament, Vol. I., St. Louis Mo., Concordia Publishing House, 1921, p. 338).

My friends, these are words that do not set well with most: "(Disciples) dare not expect their lot to be more pleasant than that of their Lord." But most do. Most want little to nothing of the cross Christ lays upon His people. Think about it!

Paul writes, "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." (1 Cor. 2:15). Think about that. The church and her message - if the message is clear and without compromise - has an aroma - a smell. We've considered this in the past. Paul then says, "to the one (that is, to those who reject Christ and hate the message that all are, by nature, sinful and undeserving of God's love) - to (such) a fragrance from death to death..." (2 Cor. 2:16a). That is to say, who we are and what we represent are repulsive and forces the world to see its sin, death and judgment of God. We are a foul odor. Then Paul said, "to the other a fragrance from life to life." (v. 16b). That is, a wonderful, pleasing, life giving aroma. Unfortunately, most of the church today smells like of this world.

Paul also writes, "For the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18). And then, he follows with this statement: "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:1,2). Why would anyone want to alter, remove, or dress up beyond recognizing the clarity of God's Word and worship for fear of offense or for fear of boring people?

Do you remember that story about the farmer whose dog followed him to town one day? This was back in the horse and buggy days. The farmer tied his horse and buggy to a post at the country store. The storekeeper, see the panting dog, scolded the farmer for making the dog run all the way while he rode. The farmer said, "That dog is not tired from following me to town. What tired him was all his foolish zigzagging. There was not an open gate, a hole in the fence, or a tree stump that he did not explore. He is tired from all his zigzagging."

It gets that way, doesn't it. Wearing ourselves out from a lot of zigzagging. We have been granted forgiveness of sin and eternal life in Christ. We have been promised God's care for us, even in the midst of our troubles. We are His people - His Holy priesthood - a people called to be a source of light and love for others. Let's remember: He is going to return. Let's remember: He will bring **the fire that cannot be extinguished**. We have work to do.

Oh, by the way, are you happy?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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*St. Luke 12:49-53*

## ***“The Coming Fire That Cannot Be Extinguished!”***

I. Hard Words

II. “A Baptism to Be Baptized With.”

III. Not Peace But Division!

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