**I'VE COME TO BRING FIRE ON THE EARTH**

**Luke 12:49-59 Key Verse 12:49**

***"I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"***

In today's passage Jesus makes a shocking statement. Do not think I have come to bring peace! I have not, I've come to bring division. Jesus in today's passage calls us to make a firm decision to follow Him, wholeheartedly and fully; to make our calling and election sure. Jesus teaches us that we are either wholly sold out to Him or we are against Him. There is no middle ground. Jesus brought us all out of our old lives of sin, in the land of our Egypt and now He is calling us to make a confession to fear and serve Him faithfully. We must be like Joshua who said in Joshua 24:14-15, "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” May God help us today to make new decisions to serve Him and Him alone.

First, Jesus came to bring fire on the earth. Look at verse 49, "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" In the Bible "fire" is used to represent many things: to represent God Himself. Deuteronomy 4:23-24 reads, "Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that He made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." "Fire" also represents the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:3-4 reads, "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Matt. 3:11 reads, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes One who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Very often "fire" represented God's judgment. Luke 3:17 reads, "His winnowing fork is in His hand to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Isaiah 30:27-30, "See, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; His lips are full of wrath, and His tongue is a consuming fire. His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; He places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray. And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people playing pipes go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. The LORD will cause people to hear His majestic voice and will make them see His arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail." Sodom and Gomorrah were brought to destruction by fire from heaven. Finally, "fire" is used to speak of purification. Zech. 13:9 reads, "This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on My Name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people', and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'" 1 Peter 1:7 reads, "These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

God's holiness is the reason for His being a consuming fire, and it burns up anything unholy. The holiness of God is that part of His nature that most separates Himself from sinful man. Isaiah wrote in Is. 33:14 that, "The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: 'Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?'" Through these verses we can see that the Fire represents the spiritual power exercised by the Lord through His Word and Spirit based on His completed work of redemption on the cross-to the undoing of those who reject Him and to the refining of those who believe in Him. Basically, God's consuming fire either acts as a purifying baptism for believers or as a consuming judgment for unbelievers.

Second, Jesus longed for it to be already kindled. Jesus came to bring this fire on the earth and He wished that it was already kindled. Jesus desired to bring this fire quickly upon the earth. He longed for the time when He would baptize His followers "with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Luke 3:16). Through this baptism all who believed in Him would be regenerated, born of the Spirit, made eternally alive as sons and daughters of God and He longed for that (Jn. 1:12-13; 3:3-6). They would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, the Spirit of truth-and He longed for that. They would no longer be alone-and He longed for that (Jn. 14:16-17). They would be sealed with the Holy Spirit as a down payment insuring their eternal inheritance. They would enjoy eternal life now (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30)-and He longed for that. They would be sanctified, made holy by the Spirit's fiery work of internal, soul purification. He would melt their hearts and skim away the impure dross from their souls so they could mirror His holy Image-and He longed for that. And ultimately their lives would be ignited, they would become fully consumed and incendiary and zealous toward the Lord and His purpose for their lives. A zealous fire would flame from their lives, the Spirit burning would rest above their willing heads, and the fire would spread-and our LORD longed for that day to come.

How Jesus longed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and with fire-the regeneration, indwelling, sealing, sanctification and ignition of His people. How He longed for judgment to fall too-to take up the "winnowing fork in His hand to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"-to at last bring justice to the earth. Jesus longed for His people to rise up consumed fully with His Word and Spirit as a conquering army of priests to make disciples of all nations and to bring our enemies down in His consuming fire. This was the real longing of Jesus' heart.

Third, Jesus couldn't wait to complete God's mission for Him on the cross. Look at verse 50, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed." Before the fire of God could be brought to earth, Jesus first had to undergo His baptism; to be immersed in death before the things for which He longed could happen. Jesus wanted to get the ordeal over with. The thought of it dominated Him-"what constraint I am under until it is completed!" What made the wait so terrible was that He knew exactly what His baptism entailed. His prolonged torture and cruel, violent death were not what distressed Him, but rather it was the necessity of His taking the raw refuse and dung of our sins, (think of the dung gate)-so that He would, in effect, would choke and drown in it and become the same and for a time be separated from the Father. (2 Cor. 5:21) "For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (Jn. 3:16) Jesus who loves us took on the sins of us all! Jesus stood before His disciples and confessed, "I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!" A short time later, after making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus said, "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your Name!" (Jn. 12:27-28a) And in the garden He prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not my will, but Yours be done. An angel from Heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." (Lk. 22:42-44) And finally on the cross, having become sin for us, He cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." (Lk. 23:46) How exalted is our Lord! How He longed to bring fire on the earth! He wished that the fire was kindled! But He had to undergo the baptism of death on the cross, immersed in our sins. And He could not wait to complete it! Jesus rushed headlong to the cross for our sake! Jesus raced forward to the cross to save us!

Fourth, Jesus did not come to bring peace, but division. Look at verse 51, "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division." The cross of Jesus brought about fire from Heaven and with it comes division. Either God's fire consumes us or it purifies, sanctifies and consecrates us. These are the only two possibilities. There are two camps, sheep and goats. And there is true hostility and enmity between the two. James 4:4 reads, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." 1 Jn. 2:15-17 reads, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world-the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever." Never give your love to the world, he warns, or to anything in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. All that the world offers is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and earthly ambition. The world and its attractiveness will pass away, but the man who has done the will of God shall live for ever.

Jn. 15:18-25 reads, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than His master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of My Name, for they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates Me hates My Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen and yet they have hated both Me and My Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated Me without reason.'" Luke 16:13 reads, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

The world hates Jesus because Jesus spoke the Word of God to the people; called people to repentance and obedience to His Word; He called them to stop loving the world, stop loving money; stop being friends with the world; to take up their cross and follow Him. This is what Jesus first called us to do. We have been called to be light and salt in this world; to testify to the deeds of our Lord; to live in obedience to His Word. We cannot continue loving and following the world. We must know we will never find peace in this world. We will never find true unity in this world.

Fifth, Jesus brings division even among the family. Look at verses 52-53, "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." In this world there are no tighter bonds than those that bind family together. But Jesus says that from now on, meaning right now, those bonds will be fractured. Jesus quoted from Micah 7:6, to show that the divisions caused by the Gospel go deep, even to the separation of close family members. And Jesus does not apologize for this either. Because He is the eternal Son of God, we must follow Him, even if it leads to family division, because He is so much more worthy of our allegiance than even the closest of earthly ties.

Of course, we should always strive for harmonious relationships in the family and we should never do anything personally offensive to cause a rift. We should love and honor family members. We should be kind and gracious, even if family members are offensive toward us. But, if family members are offended by the Gospel we believe, we are not to shrink back. We must be prepared to bear such hostility and to stand graciously but firmly for the Gospel. But we must be fully prepared for such divisions. Mark 10:29-30 reads, "'Truly I tell you,' Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for Me and the Gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-along with persecutions-and in the age to come eternal life." In truth, if we have family members who are against the Gospel, the real truth of the matter is they aren't truly our family. Jesus said in Matt. 12:46-48, "While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, His mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to Him. Someone told Him, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to You.' He replied to him, 'Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?' Pointing to His disciples, He said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers. For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother." This separation between family is not the only thing Jesus came to separate. We are to be separate from the world. His Word separates even our inner person, even our thoughts. Heb. 4:12 reads, "For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Jesus came to separate because without separation there can be no life giving work of God. When God created the Heavens and the earth, He separated light from darkness; He separated land from seas and sky from them both. He did this in order that life could come to the earth. In the same way, God brings division even in the family so that real family, life giving family may emerge!

Sixth, Interpreting the times. Look at verses 54-59, "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? As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."

Jesus wanted the people to judge for themselves what is right. What I am sharing today is hard teaching. It is not easy to accept. And no one is to judge another where they stand or don't stand. We must each come before God and see where we really stand. Some of us, may fully accept what Jesus says and do our best to obey. Others, may still be struggling to accept Jesus' Words. But Jesus did not condemn His own mother, when she did not understand what He was doing. Even his brother James, later became the head of the church in Jerusalem. So we do not know what God is doing in each of our lives. We must be careful that we don't judge each other. We must not become proud thinking we are better than others. It is not true! We all are who we are by the grace of God and nothing of our own doing. If not for the grace of God, I would not be standing where I am. And in truth, I know I am not standing where I ought to be standing. I confess that the love of this world, is deeply ingrained within me. I know what I should do, but I honestly confess I don't do it. I thank God for today's passage because God is calling me to wholly commit myself to Him and He has been preparing me for this moment for a very long time, over a quarter century. I know that I am still in need of much refining, sanctifying and purifying in my life. But I thank God, because I now can see it. Truthfully, in the past I thought I was doing alright. But I can see that I've been treating serving God's purpose as a series of activities in my life. Writing testimony, prayer, studying the Bible, inviting students to Bible study, studying the Bible with them, coming faithfully to worship service, etc, etc. But I can see that my person has not been fully consumed by the fire and Spirit of God. My thoughts are almost always concerning my desires and worries and ideas, very seldom are they truly on advancing God's Kingdom or truly worshipping Him in Spirit and truth. I surf the internet, I look for my comfort and enjoyment and ease. Now, I don't want anyone to think that because I say these things about myself, means that I think everyone else should think the way I do. This is God's conviction to me. This is my faith. Some say one day is holy; while others say every day is holy. It is not for me to judge others faith or conviction before God. Each person must give account to God, not me, nor I to anyone else. But we all must be honest before God and see where we truly stand. We must ask ourselves, "Am I truly set apart for God?" If not, then we need to realize that the time is now for us to be reconciled to our Judge, before it is too late.

At the Summer Bible conference we heard God's voice, "I am God Almighty, walk before Me faithfully and be blameless." We confessed our sins and made new decisions of faith to do so. We prayed that God would use our lives as living sacrifices, to use us once more for His Kingdom purpose. And God has heard our cry and our prayers and now He is calling us to fully commit ourselves to Him. We are like Joshua and the people who stand before the walls of Jericho, the great bastion that denies us entry into the Promised Land. Joshua 5:13-15 reads, "Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a Man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in His hand. Joshua went up to Him and asked, 'Are You for us or for our enemies?' 'Neither,' He replied, 'but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.' Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked Him, 'What message does My Lord have for His servant?' The commander of the LORD'S army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so." The question is not whether God is on our side, but rather are we on God's side? Are we fully committed to Him and His calling and purpose or are we committed and serving some other purpose?

God is pouring out His Spirit in these last days. Acts 2:17-18 reads, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" I can see that God is fulfilling these verses. We are surely in the last days. Love is growing cold. The world is persecuting true believers at a greater rate than ever in the past. And His Spirit is being poured out on His people. Last week in Syria, a family of 12, who converted from Islam and became believers, when faced with death if they did not renounce their faith and return back to Islam, refused and they were all killed. Two of the women before they were beheaded cried out, "Jesus save us!" They did not renounce Him! In Kentucky one woman named Kim Davis, a county clerk, refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples and was subsequently thrown into jail for contempt of court for defying the Supreme Court decision to legalize same-sex marriages. She said she could not do so, because it violated her conscience and God's authority. She said, "This is a heaven or hell issue for me and for every other Christian that believes." Since she made this decision she has experienced the full wrath of not only the state against her, but public opinion, who have shown such hatred towards her. Our nation not only allows same-sex marriage, but now more and more states are legalizing drug usage. This nation is going from bad to worse. And where do we stand? Do we stand on the side of God or do we stand on the side of the world? We must realize that we are on a collision course with this world and to face this very question, are we on God's side or the worlds?

I am very thankful when I heard that Msn. Augustine recently when faced with financial needs and what to do. When asked whether his wife should work, told her plainly, "No! You continue to serve God's Work on the campus as of first importance! God will surely provide our needs. God will give me a job!" I realized just how great a servant of God he truly is! I realized just how blessed Msn. Petra is to have such a man of God as her husband! How happy and blessed Theo and Mailyn are! Every time I think about Msn. Paul and Esther's faithfulness and life of faith. I am truly amazed and thankful. Even though Msn. Paul has served faithfully God's mission purpose for his life, he has experienced much heartache and disappointment. Seeing his students again and again, misunderstand him, and blame him and criticize him, but still he continues to go to campus and to share the Gospel again and again. I am amazed at Shep. Chamnon's life of faith. Even though her school studies were so difficult and she had several false starts and stops, she continued to persevere and trust in God and finally, she is winning the victory and conquering her nursing program. I thank God for my spiritual mother, who for many years has continued to go fishing all the way at UCLA without finding even one new student, ever since she began studying with Seth. But she has persevered and God allowed her this quarter, to miraculously meet two new students: Laura and I don't know the other. I am amazed at my sons, Peter, Andrew, Mark, Joseph and Joshua. They are all growing in their faith. And so are my daughters, Maggie and Angie. I am amazed at my wife, who truly has sold her belongings and is giving to the poor. So much so, that she got sick and several times was so tired that when she got home she parked the car and fell asleep for 15-20 minutes, because she was too tired to get out of the car! I am moved by Frank and Samia's faith. Frank renewed his decision to be a Bible teacher and is serving Golden West College. And I heard Samia, is looking for someone to go fishing with her at Santa Ana College. I didn't even know there was such a school! I heard Samia got Vina a job at her work place, so perhaps Samia has found her coworker, not only at work, but on the campus as well! I am so amazed when I heard that Msn. David and Blessing Cho, made a decision to sell their home in the great neighborhood of Cerritos, next to one of the best high schools in the nation, Whitney High, and move back closer to Downey, because they want to join early morning prayer meeting and to be closer to the family of God. I am amazed every morning when I see so many people come to the main sanctuary and pray together and to do so for the last six weeks without fail. We have had such a desire in the past, but we were never able to do so. But I believe God has been hearing our prayers and has been pouring out His Spirit among us and enabling us to come and to pray together as one body, for one another and for our nation and for this world. There are so many more stories I could share, but I will leave it here. I truly pray God would hear our prayer and help us so that all of us may come and pray together! I believe God is doing an amazing work among us. But now He is calling us to fully commit ourselves to Him. To love Him with ALL our heart, soul, strength and mind; completely and wholly.

May God's fire fall upon us! May His fire consume us, but not destroy us!

One Word: I've come to bring fire on the earth!