

Spiritual Readiness, #2 Luke 12:49-59

Intro: This morning we looked at Luke 12:35-48. Jesus emphasized three things about spiritual readiness: 1) the need for it (He said we should not put on our sleeping clothes and turn out the lights but rather be like slaves who are awake and dressed waiting for our Master when He arrives); 2) the reason (Jesus' coming will be like a thief, we do not know the exact time of His coming), 3: the obligations of it for disciples (our greater privilege as disciples of the Lord places upon us a greater responsibility to be faithful to the trust He has given us).

As Jesus continued the discussion that day with His disciples and the multitudes, he spoke of two other important things about spiritual readiness. First he gave a word of clarification to the disciples and then a word of warning to the masses.

Barriers to spiritual readiness

v. 49-53 What Jesus is revealing in this section is that it will not be easy to be a ready and faithful servant of God in this world that has chosen the path of sin.

That difficulty can only best be understood when we understand Jesus' mission on earth.

He came to "cast fire upon the earth". In Biblical language "casting fire" was a symbol of judgment. What Jesus is saying is that He came to execute God's wrath against evil-doers.

John as His forefather said, "Mt. 3:7-12".

Here Jesus expresses his own long-suffering in postponing that day of wrath, for in His justice he could say, "How I wish it were already kindled".

The only thing that hindered that "fire" from being cast was Jesus own love for the sinner that would take him to the cross.

Thus he said, I have a "baptism" I must undergo. Jesus must himself be immersed in sufferings that we might be saved.

And we, as his followers, must be prepared to realize that the conflict that took him to the cross will also lead to spiritual conflict for us as well. And it is not easy to endure this. Thus, he says:

I came not to grant peace but a sword (v. 51) The inevitable by-product of the gospel is division. The gospel is a unifying message but only among those willing to be compliant with the will of the Lord. Read Lk. 2:14 again. Just as it unites those who are submissive to God, it separates those who will not submit. It puts the two groups into the deepest conflict. It divides the closest human relationships (v. 52-53) It is not easy to stand for what is right against the world, against family, against friends.

It is not easy to be a faithful servant of God in this time.

You will be different from everyone else. You may be ridiculed and made fun of. Moreover, others will actively work against you, keeping you from succeeding in doing the will of God. They will contradict our message, seek to undermine our influence. Jesus says, If we allow ourselves to be overcome with discouragement, we will go up in flames with the rest.

We hear a lot about peer pressure. We speak of it as if it begins about the sixth grade and disappears about your last year in college. Folks, we live with it all our lives! The tendency to want to be accepted by all, respected by all, admired by all, approved by all goes with us all the way through life. And adults have as much temptation to go along with the crowd as do the young people. And young people, know that it will not be over in a few years. It will go with you all through life!

Let's not let the barriers to faithfulness hinder us.

Motivation to spiritual readiness

v. 54-59 What motivates people to get ready to meet the Lord? The answer: Personal initiative based on observing the times.

Our society is sensitive and informed about things that don't really matter all that much (politics, sports, weather, computers, investments, restaurants, and vacation sites) and are completely undiscerning about what is really important to their eternal salvation. So were the people of Jesus' day:

They could "test" the signs in the sky. They were excellent weather prognosticators. Rain from the Mediterranean and Siroccos from the southeastern desert.

But they did not have a clue about what was going on under their nose. The very Son of God, the Messiah of O.T. Scripture was standing in their midst and they did not recognize him! John had prepared the way for Him, testifying that He was the Christ. He had performed remarkable signs to authenticate his claims. Yet they were rejecting him. That was a thing of unspeakable tragedy.

Their nation was fulfilling up the measure of hers sins and was heading down precipitously down the bank of ruin; but they could not see it.

I wonder if the people of our society are any different. We live in the "information age" yet never have people been more ignorant of the way to life, happiness, morality and salvation.

What is the answer to this problem: It is centers in two key concepts:

Every man, woman, boy, and girl needs to start "thinking". The word Jesus uses is "test" or "analyze". That's not something people do much of any more.

The second is "initiative". (KJV, of yourselves). We need the inward personal motivation to save our own souls from disaster before it reaches us. We need initiative to find out what is right and do it! No one can make you prepare for the judgment. No one can make you

decide what is right and do it. You are dependent upon no one else to make that decision. Only you can do that. Only you can love the truth enough to find out what is right.

There will come a time when preparation can not be made, v. 58-59.

Jesus illustrates with a man who is guilty of not taking the initiative to make a wrong right before he makes his appearance in court. Then, there will be no mercy but only the justice of law.

In a similar way: all men stand obligated to pay the price for their sins. But there is a window of mercy grant to us in the Lord. But if we will not accept that opportunity, then we must pay the full price for our own sins. We will be lost forever.

And so we need to show the personal initiative based on the times. We need to save our souls while we can. This is what Peter was saying to those on Pentecost with many other words, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation".

Conclusion: We must be prepared to overcome the influence of the world if we are to be truly prepared.