

Christ Came to Divide

Luke 12:51-53

January 10, 2021

I'd like to invite all of you to turn in your bibles to Luke Chapter 12. And we're going to continue what we started last week so Luke 12:49 and following. As we saw last week, Jesus sees the world as divided into two basic groups. His, his work as Messiah acknowledges two basic groups. There are those who will go through the fire of his judgment, and then there are those who are included in his baptism. Who avoid the fire of his judgment, but he takes on the judgment through his own baptism, as it were by fire.

Today is a passage that's going to cover the implications of this division and how it plays out in our lives and even as intimate of a setting as our home life. Let's start just by looking at the two verses we covered last time, Luke 12:49-50, Jesus says "I came to cast fire on the earth and would that it

were already kindled. I have a baptism to be baptized with and how great is my distress until it is accomplished."

Jesus is here looking ahead, looking to the end of time. The fire of divine judgment that he is going to come and cast upon the earth. But between that time, the time and still future to us, between that time and now, Jesus finds himself under the deepening shadow of the cross. Just a few months' time, he will soon go through the fire of divine judgment on behalf of his people.

Representing them, Jesus will take upon himself their sins and he will go through a baptism as it were; a full emersion in the fearful wrath of God. This is why Jesus came. "God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." Which points to the baptism that Jesus had to be baptized with. "In order that we might become the righteousness of God in him." This is the only basis of our salvation. There is no other foundation of our salvation than the work of Christ and this is the very heart of the gospel that we proclaim to others.

Jesus sees the world in those two verses as divided by judgment. Divided by the judgment of God, that he will pursue in his role as Messiah. There are those who will go through the fire of divine judgment on their own, with no protection, with no refuge from the angry wrath of God and there are those whom Christ will represent in his baptism into judgment. He'll go through the judgment for them. That is the most fundamental division that exists, the most basic, the most radical. And there are implications of this division in our relationships. Look at verse 51, Jesus said, "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 her mother-in-law."

Frederic Godet commenting on these verses said this, "Jesus sees himself about to be plunged into a bath of flame from which he shall come forth with the torch which shall set the whole world on fire." And that fire, that flame, is in the home. As we've been seeing in our own nation, the fire of division which

is conflict, it's shocking, it's even alarming. I mean who loves conflict, who likes it, only a madman. Who wants to see the upsetting of peace? Who wants to see the disruption, the division, the violence? You'd have to be a madman as I said, or woefully immature to love conflict, to love controversy, to seek conflict and division, after all "Blessed are the peacemakers" right?

We love peace, we long for peace, but here's where we need to be very careful. Are we to love peace at any cost? Will we compromise for the sake of peace? Will we set aside principle and truth to get peace? Will we refuse to speak up in protest? Will we shrink back from doing what's right to keep some ostensible peace in society, peace in the workplace, or even peace in the family, peace in the home?

The love of peace is a good thing, but like any good thing the pursuit of peace becomes idolatrous when it is not grounded in righteousness. When the love of peace is not guarded by truth, when it's not pursued in wisdom, when it's not aimed at holiness. In the absence of other virtues that scripture places



on equal priority, righteousness, truth, wisdom, holiness, any such peace without those virtues is a false peace.

Which is what characterizes all false religion. How quickly the dove of peace can turn into a bird of prey. So as we grapple with Jesus' words here, we need to take them at face value. We don't want to try to soften them or modify them in any way, we need to accept them on their face. We need to then set our expectations according to what he is telling us here so we can prepare our minds for whatever consequences we will face for the sake of Christ and his gospel.

There's some very real consequences of following him aren't there? Division that's deep that affects personal relationships. It creates conflict within the refuge of every home, which forces every single one of us to a choice. Who will I fear? Who will I prefer? To whom will I be loyal, flesh and blood or God? So two points for this morning, two points, first one, number one, the presence of spiritual division. Number one, the presence of spiritual division. Just talking about a fact, it's a fact, it is a fact that there is the presence of

spiritual division in the world. Because there exists a fundamental division between the godly and the ungodly, listen, you need to not be surprised by division, but you need to expect it. Do not be surprised by division, expect it. Again verse 51, "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."

So his question here as he talks about the implications of the division of humanity, it's aimed at contradicting this popular Jewish notion, alive and well during Jesus time, a common misconception, that the Messiah's coming would usher in an unprecedented reign of, of peace and prosperity in their time. Now, if Israel had repented at Christ's first coming, peace would have come to Israel. Sadly that didn't happen.

But in the sovereign plan of God, Israel's rejection has meant salvation for the Gentiles. Romans 11:25-27 says this, Paul says "I do not want you to be unaware this mystery brothers a partial hardening has come upon Israel. Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and in this way all Israel will be

saved," in what way, he says, "as it is written the deliverer will come from Zion he will banish ungodliness from Jacob this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

So the banishment of ungodliness from Jacob as the deliverer comes from Zion, from the, the stronghold of Jerusalem, that did not happen at Jesus' first coming because Israel did not turn to Christ in repentance and faith. What Christ saw, what Jesus saw in Israel at this moment was the hardening of the nation. Exactly what was prophesied, no peace, there will be no peace apart from repentance and faith. He will not compromise for the sake of peace.

There must be repentance and faith and that's not going to happen for Israel until the last days. Sometime earlier in Jesus' ministry before he left Galilee you may remember we covered this in Luke 9. When Jesus sent out the twelve he gave them some instruction as he went out and some similar words set their expectations. Similar to what we're reading right now, Matthew 10:34 he says "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth, I have not come to bring peace but a sword."

So they needed to realize, the disciples needed to realize as we do, in taking Christ's Gospel of peace to the world not everybody is going to be excited to receive it. Many will reject it, it will reveal a deep internal division that's only exposed through gospel proclamation and righteous allegiance to God through obedient living. This is why Paul warned Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:12 "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. While evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

So for all who represent God and his Gospel, whether it's Christ, his apostles, Christians today, Christians ever since the time of Christ and his apostles. Or if we go back and look at the prophets and the priests of old. All who desire to live godly will be persecuted, rejected in their own time and rejected by their own people. By own people I don't just mean their own ethnic tribe. I mean family members as well. This is what Christ is saying.



We see this in the Old Testament as faithful prophets warned the people about coming judgment. For example, God promised to destroy Jerusalem in the Babylonian invasion. He'd warned them, warned them, warned them, sent them prophet after prophet. Priests teaching the law, prophets calling them to obey the law, to repent of their sins, to turn to God, to turn back to Yahweh, they didn't. And so the warnings got stronger. The warnings became more frequent and he said, God said "You are going to go into judgment, you're going to be sent into exile, unless you repent."

Judah ignored the prophets, they preferred to listen instead to false prophets. You can see it in Jeremiah chapter 6, if you'd like to turn there just briefly in your bibles, Jeremiah chapter 6 in verse 10, God said, he said clearly and plainly by the mouths of his prophets, "There is no peace for the wicked."

From the Jews' point of view they thought, "The wicked that doesn't include me I'm a child of Abraham." Oh but their practicing the same sins of all the Canaanites around them. God

said there's no peace for the wicked, and I am not, I am an impartial judge. I don't favor you based on your parentage, based on your heritage.

The people though, from the kings and his officials to all the way down to the common people all through the land, they preferred to listen to the voice of false prophets, of rebellious priests. All of them who were telling the people what they wanted to hear. In Jeremiah 6:10 it says this "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold their ears are uncircumcised they cannot listen. Behold the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn and they take no pleasure in it.

Therefore I am full of the wrath of the Lord. I am weary of holding it in, pour it out upon the children in the streets, upon the gatherings of young men, also both husband and wife shall be taken. The elderly and the very aged, their houses shall be turned over to others, their fields and wives together. For I will stretch out my hand against the inhabitants of the land declares the Lord. For from the least to the greatest of

them everyone is greedy for unjust gain. And from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace."

That's what characterizes unbelievers. Ears that don't hear, ears that can't listen. The word of the Lord, the preaching of the truth, is to them an object of scorn. They take no pleasure in God's word. Everyone from prophet to priest deals falsely, they're greedy for unjust gain. And the spiritual leadership says "away with you true prophets, give us those prophets that say 'Peace, peace' when there really is no peace at all."

Listen we hear the same refrains today all throughout our society the general call of peace is always the mark of false religion. When you hear people saying, peace, peace, when there's nothing but wickedness and corruption, there's no call for peace. When we look past all the wickedness in our world and say, God bless America, what we ought to be saying is, God, bless us with the coming of your justice and your judgment on this country. Because we want to see your justice reign, your

justice and your truth prevail and only then do we want to see peace cover the land when everything is made right before you.

False religion though, soothes everyone saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. It's only true religion that cries out, repent and believe. Pope Francis represents a false peace. In a video called, *At the Service of Human Fraternity*, which he released this past week, the Pope said, quote, "the church values God's action in other religions."

He told Christians to return to what's essential, and what's essential according to the Pope? The adoration of God and love of neighbor, and then he called upon them to pray for, quote, "The grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions. And not fight each other but open ourselves to all."

Folks that is the religion of the beast. That is anti-Christ's religion. And that is what we're going to hear and we're gonna hear it from evangelical quarters, as well as mainline denominational quarters; we're going to hear it from

Muslims and Jews and he calls himself a Christian, the vicar of Christ.

Contrary to Pope Francis, contrary to the false prophets who scorned and abused Jeremiah, contrary to Israel's corrupt spiritual leadership, Jesus said deep spiritual division exists. And there is no peace, his disciples need to factor that in. They need to adjust their thinking, they need to expect this. Jesus said in Luke 12:51, "Do you think that I've come to bring peace on earth? No I tell you but rather division." Then in verse 52 he told them from now on houses would be divided. Houses will be divided.

Let's make a few observations here before moving on. I'm going to give you five observations just of the text here. First observation, the question that Jesus asked "do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?" The verb translated here, I have come, that's not the same verb we talked about last time, the verb *erchomai* that Jesus used back in verse 49. Remember we said last week that Jesus used that verb *erchomai* combined with an infinitive, now not always but often, he used it as a technical way of referring to his mission.

So, "I came to cast fire on earth" Luke 12, that's not the same verb that's used here. The verb here in verse 51 is the verb *paraginomai* which points more to his arrival on the scene. So it's not I came in the sense of my mission. It's, I've arrived, in the sense of, here I am. "I came to cast fire" verse 49, and now that I've arrived, verse 51 it's not for peace but to expose that basic division that exists.

This raises a second observation, another observation, back in Luke 10:1. The Lord appointed seventy two messengers, seventy two, you can call them evangelists, or missionaries, but seventy two and he sent them on ahead of him two by two into every town and place where he himself was about to go. We saw back then in that study in Luke 10 there were receptive towns, Luke 10:5-9, and there were other towns, other people, other homes, that rejected the messengers. Jesus told them in Luke 10:10-12, "When you enter a town and they do not receive you go into its streets and say even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God is near."

Your rejection doesn't change the fact that the kingdom of God is on the march and it's coming through your town and it's visited you, it's passing through, and I tell you it will be more bearable on that day than for Sodom, on that day than for Sodom, than for that town. So the result of Jesus visiting anywhere is to reveal the division that exists between receptive hearts and rejecting hearts.

We can add a third brief observation, third observation, Jesus says do you think that I've come to give peace, and his answer when he says, "no I tell you but rather division." No, is really strong here. It's an emphatic form as in, by no means did I come to bring peace. Again he's just being emphatic that there's no peace apart from repentance and faith. There's no peace apart from reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ and through him alone and his arrival, whether it's then or his arrival now through the gospel that we preach, his arrival makes the fact that that deep division plain and obvious.

A fourth observation, look at verse 52, Luke 12:52, when Jesus says, "From now on in one house five will be divided" and so forth. That expression, from now on, that's one that Luke highlights throughout his Gospel. From now on, from now on, it signals a before and after. It, It's a watershed moment, it's a dividing line event, from now on. Mary said, chapter 1 verse 48, "From now on all generations will call me blessed." And so it is, we call her blessed to this day.

Jesus said to Simon, Luke 5:10, "From now on you will be catching men." He left behind the fishing and started catching men, and it was. Jesus said to his disciples later on, Luke 22:18, "From now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes," and so it is to this day. From now on, it's a division, dividing line moment. And it's apparent here as Jesus says in the most intimate of places, in the home, flesh and blood is not deep enough to unite over this division. From now on, the deepest most basic identity, from now on it will not be a family identity. From now on it will be a spiritual identity. From now on a dividing line between those who are in Christ, and those who are outside of Christ. From now on, that's the watershed.



And finally a fifth observation when Jesus says in verse 52, "From now on in one house there will be five divided." The verb form makes it plain here, it's kind of different, when the, when the, how it reads in english, but the verb form is a perfect passive. And it can be translated literally as, "they will have been divided." So the division is something they will have been divided, the division is something that is revealed to them. It's not caused but it's revealed whenever it is that Christ arrives.

Okay so, what's the takeaway of those five observations, so what? Two things, first take away. This is why the clear proclamation of the true Christ is so very critical because in order to see this division plainly we need to present Jesus for who he really is. And that is to say we need to present him in the fullness of his messianic ministry, not just the parts of him that we think others are going to like and accept.

If we only present the, the friendlier version of Jesus, savior, comforter, friend, things that are all true, but if we

fail to present his role as conquering king, as inflexible judge, as the one who comes to execute justice and cast fire on the earth, then you know what, we're presenting a distorted Christ. We're not presenting the true Christ. We're not presenting the full saving gospel to people. And so if we present a distorted Christ well it stands to reason that we're not going to see the division clearly. Everybody likes a friendly happy Jesus.

The second take away from those observations is that the fact of division isn't necessarily indicative of a problem. Division, when you present the gospel, when you live according to righteous principle, when you live according to the Lordship of Christ, division could indicate a problem. You could be a divisive contentious person, you could be a real jerk, maybe you're the problem. You're the one revealing division because nobody likes you because you're a contentious person and you're constantly stirring up trouble.

Now let's suppose you're not that, because I assume better things of all of you, nobody here is going to do that. Suppose

someone acts in a godly way, impeccable integrity, preaches this full gospel, lives in accordance with it, in boldness in humility presenting the truth, listen, division will be an effect of a clear gospel. Division will be an effect of a clear Gospel in living according to a clear gospel. If you're life and your witness and your gospel is not revealing any division between the people, you and the people you know, you might want to ask yourself a few questions, hard questions, about your own clarity.

Ask hard questions about your own life. Is it clearly, distinctly, unambiguously, Christian in the pattern of Christ or is there some level of mediocrity there? It happened in the homes where into which Jesus came. It happened in the villages where he arrived and we know that Jesus did everything in a righteous and gracious way. There was nothing lacking in his witness.

Still, his arrival meant, verse 52, "that in one house five are divided, three against two and two against three." There are two saved by grace, and three who remained in sin, or vice

versa. Who he is and what he has said and what he has done, who he represents, Jesus Christ always comes and exposes the division that exists between the righteous and the unrighteous, between the repentant and the unrepentant. So, when you see that happening, when you see division apparent, clear, don't be quick to assume you've done something wrong, that you haven't been clear, or even that you've caused division. Remember what Jesus says here and recognize that the gospel, its very purpose is to expose a deep divide.

Remember how John the Baptist referred to Jesus, the Lord and his winnowing fork? The work of the winnowing fork, it reveals the chaff to be chaff. And it reveals the wheat to be wheat. His Word, it reveals and exposes reality. It's going to happen. J.C. Ryle said, "Peace is undoubtedly the result of the Gospel," and then added this qualification, "wherever it is believed and received. Peace is the result of the Gospel. But wherever there are hearers of the Gospel who are hardened and impenitent and determined to have their sins the very message of peace because the cause of division." End Quote.

Those who believe and receive the message of peace in the Gospel, listen, they're radically changed aren't they? They're regenerated by the Holy Spirit. I mean they may appear to be the same person on the outside, where everybody can see them. But they have become something fundamentally different, internally, spiritually, they are new creations in Christ.

They are not at all the person that they were before regeneration. They're fundamentally new, and only time will tell they're changed, they're different. Ryle again, he said "Those who are dominated by the flesh will hate those who are dominated by the Spirit. Those who have resolved to live for the world will always be evil toward those who have resolved to follow Christ. We may lament this state of things, but we cannot prevent it. So long as some are converted and some are unconverted there can be no true peace." End Quote.

Folks don't be surprised by division, instead expect, and in fact, you might even be a bit encouraged when the division becomes apparent, because that could be evidence that you've made the gospel clear, that your proclamation is true, and

clear, and understandable, that your life is demonstrably Christian. So Jesus would have us set righteous expectations here, that's what this is about. He wants us to set righteous expectation. He wants us to know that his gospel, it reveals a division in the society at large. So don't be surprised by the division. Take courage, expect it. Stay loyal to Christ over all others even family.

This is where all this instruction becomes intensely personal as division becomes apparent in our homes. This is what's so hard for us because it moves against all of our natural instincts. So in the second point, let's, let's talk honestly about this, second point, the consequence of spiritual division. Number two, the consequence of spiritual division. There is nowhere, I would, I would assume there is nowhere, there's nowhere we find spiritual division to be more painful, more distressing, more perplexing, than when we have to face it in the home.

Because the consequence of division between believers and unbelievers is conflict, and who wants conflict in the home?

Though it may be painful, though it creates stress and sadness, don't be alarmed by the conflict, but instead embrace it. Don't be alarmed by the conflict, embrace it. Look again at verse 52 From now on , "for from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three." Remember that verb translated, will be divided, that's actually an English gloss, it's, it's a perfect passive, so it's more literally translated, they will have been divided.

Again just to remind you the division is not something that will happen in the future. It's something that is right now. It has been, it's there whether you see it or not, whether it's apparent or not, sometimes it's masked over by a false religious profession. Sometimes it's masked over by a false profession of Christianity, but the division is there. God knows those who are his. They have the seal of God on them, the Holy Spirit living in them, God can see who's, who's his and who's not. He's not fooled by what's apparent, by what's on the outside. God sees not as man sees, man looks on the external appearance, but God looks at the what? The heart. So division is something that's here in verse 52, it's not something that's pointing to in the future, it's something that is something that's present now,

it's just maybe hidden. It's internal, but from now on the internal division that's already been there now it's being exposed and revealed, it's coming out. Which is what Jesus points to with a different verb tense in verse 53, here he says, "They will be divided." That is future tense.

So the internal reality of division that's present is being exposed and it will reveal itself in the future, in outward external visible conflicts, conflicts in the home. Jesus notes the lines of division in the home in verse 53:5, people and the conflicts they experience as a result of the division. Look there, "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." The grammar shows us how the existent division results in conflict which is why the ESV and other translations use that word, *against*. Against father, against son, son against father, mother against daughter, and so on. So we're grammatically justified here in assigning believing and unbelieving to one of the two parties in each of these scenarios and that's just gonna help us clarify them.



So, first there will be a conflict between the men in the home, and then the women in the home. So he talks about the conflict between the men in the home first. There's a conflict between the believing father and his unbelieving son on the one hand, and conflict between the believing son and the unbelieving father on the other hand. It's not too hard to imagine the details especially if you've lived through this in your own home.

When a believing father sees his unbelieving son make unbelieving decisions, the way he handles his life, his wife, his family, his work, when he sees his unbelieving son being an unbeliever, pursuing life in an unwise or an ungodly way, you know what the tension in the home increases. Why, because unbelieving priorities and believing priorities do not mix. It's like oil and water. And an unbelieving lifestyle coming in to a believing home creates chaos. The father is responsible to provide oversight, lead his home, make decisions informed by his faith, matters of righteousness weigh on his mind, govern his decisions, they restrict the desires of an unbelieving son, hinder sinful or unwise ambitions, and he acts out. It's difficult.

On the other hand, if you have a believing son with an unbelieving father, he feels the tension of honoring his father and honoring his God. The father's expectations in particular can have an extremely strong hold on the consciences of children, even grown children. Boys and girls, young men, young women, and all too often doing what the father wants, an unbelieving father, doing what he wants is framed as a matter of honor or dishonor, respect or disrespect.

So you do what I say, you do what I've counseled, you do what I want, in order to respect me, in order to honor me. And when a son or a daughter, and what's, what's that child to do, when his conscience, her conscience, is caught between these loyalties? Honoring God certainly puts her in the position of displeasing, disappointing, her father. Perhaps significantly which is then interpreted as dishonor and even disdain.

Look, we know as believers you can honor somebody without doing what they've said. Right, without obeying them. We can honor them even if we're not going to do what they say because

what they say is actually a bad course of action. When it's unbelieving counsel, unregenerate counsel? Martin Luther's father, Hanz Luther, through sweat, blood and tears he forged a respectable living out of the rock of the earth.

In mining, he worked his fingers to the bone for his family in the hope that his gift of hard work would help his own son escape the hot fires and iron, of iron pits and furnaces. Hanz wanted to see Martin take advantage of the upward mobility happening in society to, he wanted him to study law so he funded his education to be a lawyer. You remember the story that Martin Luther was thrown from his horse on one rainy stormy night, he narrowly escaped a lightning bolt. And he took that near miss as a sign that God spared his life for the ministry.

So he joined the Augustinian cloister. Those different monk cloisters were places to get an education, religious education. But for, you know, for Hanz Luther he was upset because not only was this not like going to an ivy league school, Harvard, Penn State, or even something, you know, with any kind of reputation, it was like going to a community college level in the

Augustinian cloister. Not only that, but he had to become a beggar monk, raising his living off of begging from others. I mean this, for a hard working man like Hanz Luther, this was anathema, you don't do this.

His father Hanz was furious. You can imagine as a father, you've been working twenty years for this kid's life. Tucking away, tucking away, tucking away for this kid's education. Martin's rather rash decision, and it was a rash decision, spurned his father's decades of hard work and sacrificial investment. I mean we're thankful that the God's providence lead him this way. We're here today because of what God did through Luther, through the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther's conscience was bound to scripture and believing reason. But we have to acknowledge what it's like to live through the tension between believers and unbelievers in the home, which separates and divides sons from fathers and fathers from sons. It's hard.

The next set of scenarios portrays conflict between women in the home. Whether that happens in the nuclear family with flesh and blood connections, or it occurs in the extended family

when the connections are legal through marriage. Just a quick grammar note here as we get to the women. A grammatical change in the text marks an escalation in the intensity of the, with the women in the home and the conflict. One level of tension and conflict between the men, but the intensity of that conflict ratchets up when the women are involved.

Godet says, "The grammar here indicates hostility with more energy. Religious hostility is here strengthened with previous natural animosity and even more when it comes to the in-law relationship." Prudence instructs me to make no further comment on that. I just needed to be faithful. I just needed to be faithful in pointing it out to you. Now that I've done that I'm going to move on.

The con, there's the conflict between the men, but then secondly there's conflict with escalating intensity with women in the home. Jesus first notes the conflict between the women within the nuclear family, the mother and daughter, and then he notes the conflict with the mother and her daughter-in-law which is an additional tension. And here in the text the same woman is

portrayed as a mother to her daughter and also a mother-in-law to her daughter-in-law.

Why is there no father-in-law/son-in-law scenario here because, at this time, men didn't typically move into their in-law's home. When a young man married, he brought his bride back to his father's house. He built a life for her and for them there, so Jesus sticks here with what's most typical. So spiritual conflict between the women, Jesus starts with the nuclear family. Conflict between a believing mother and her unbelieving daughter on the one hand, and then the believing daughter and the unbelieving mother on the other hand.

There is no one size fits all way to explain the relationship between all mothers and all daughters but we can easily observe how natural maternal concern can create pressures and set expectations for their daughters. When both women are believers, mother and daughter, believer, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, believers, a mother's concern for her daughter or daughters-in-law to grow in holiness, to speak and behave with godly propriety, to build godly habits, to be devoted to

husband and children, to embrace serving the family, to grow fruitful in, in good works. All that maternal pressure is a true gift of God.

Some daughters react very well to this godly maternal concern, others less so even, even believing daughters, it all depends on maturity, whether or not the heart is oriented toward gratitude, whether or not the heart recognizes the gift of God in a godly mother. Her counsel, her influence. But recognize division, mother and daughter divided by regeneration. Divided by conversion. Divided by faith or lack of faith. One believer, the other not a believer, when these two women are not operating from the same world view, there's a whole different ball game in play here.

For one, the believer, the biblical portrayal of womanhood, that a woman is a helpmeet to her husband. She takes a roll of active thoughtful submission to her husband in the home. She serves her children and loves them. It's all informed by the growth in wisdom that's applied to her marriage and her family.



For one of these women, the believing one, this is God's design and high ideal for women.

For the other, for the unbeliever, this is the very picture of patriarchy and oppression and all that is wrong in the world. For the unbeliever, biblical womanhood is everything that's wrong in the world and she hates it to the core. Add the in-law tension to this, the conflict increases by a magnitude of ten. Believing mother-in-law in conflict with her unbelieving daughter-in-law, or vice versa, because that young woman is married to the mother's son. Huge tensions here. Again, think about the world that we're living in right now and apply this to the world that we're living in.

The triumph of modern feminism, it's been aided, abetted, accelerated today by critical theory, intersectionality, the LGBTQ revolution, cultural hostility against biblical womanhood is at a fever pitch. What we teach, what we practice here in our church as a matter of course, as a matter of biblical fidelity, is anathema to the world. It is the very height of injustice, it's the very height of cruelty, hatred, severe oppression. It's



everything that a woman should be freed from. What God says is good and wise and holy.

Recently it was made aware of, and I looked it up in the Guardian newspaper, reported on a Twitter post and it was Twitter removed this post, they're kind of doing that a lot these days. But they removed a post quote from the Guardian, post linked to an article by state mouthpiece China Daily which said, here's the quote from the China Daily news piece, "Study shows that in the process of eradicating extremism the minds of weaker women in Xingjian were emancipated and gender equality and reproductive health were promoted making them no longer baby making machines. They are more confident and independent."

We're talking about forced sterilization of these women, and they're calling it emancipation. Forced sterilization becomes promoting gender equality and reproductive health. Forced sterilization of women is now called freeing them from being nothing more than baby making machines. Oh, now that they've been forced to be sterilized, they're more confident and independent. Especially, that's, that's, that's coming here

folks, that's China. We're doing a lot of business with China. You know what happens when we do a lot of business with China? We start to drop our standards. We start to drop our convictions, drop principles.

We want peace for the sake of prosperity, so we're not going to make a big stink over forced sterilizations. One child policies. Especially today, critical theory, intersectionality, cultural Marxism, today's secularism has moved from an irreligious standpoint to a deeply religious standpoint. Today's secularists believe they are championing righteous causes. They are practicing religion through politics and through social activism. And at every point they are in collision course with divine righteousness revealed in God's word.

These vastly opposed values, which are sourced deeply in radically convicting worldviews, when they show up in the home, when they are joined to maternal feminine concern, when they're accelerated by feminine passion, you have all the elements in the home of a perfect storm, relationally speaking. All that to

say, the natural consequence of division between believers and unbelievers in the home is conflict in the home.

It's painful, it's distressing, it can cause deep sadness, but listen this is nothing new. Believers throughout the centuries have had to experience this exact same thing. The same pain, the same sorrow. They've had to prefer righteousness over all of this. They've had to set a higher priority on pleasing God than preserving a false superficial peace within the family.

So I'm just telling you based on what Christ says here, do not be alarmed by the conflict. Expect it and embrace it. And now that Jesus has reset our expectations, that there is a presence of spiritual division and the resulting consequence of that division is conflict in the home. What are we supposed to do about it? Let me give you some points of application here.

A few points of application, number one, first and most obvious, just simply this accept the reality of spiritual division by acknowledging that it can happen in your home. It can happen and probably will. Accept the reality of spiritual

division by acknowledging that it can happen in your home, probably will. It does not good whatsoever to anybody to pretend the spiritual division does not exist. Or that it won't or can't happen in your home. Jesus tells us spiritual division does exist. So if you deny that reality, you're denying the word's of Christ. Don't do that. Division does exist, it will exist, it will happen in your home as well.

For you who are parents and grandparents, for you this means you can't ignore the sins that have come to characterize your children or your grandchildren. Now that they're all grown up, now that it has become apparent that they have no interest in the church. Now that it's become clear that they live lifestyles that are remarkably similar to everybody else's in their peer group in the world. Perhaps even harder, now that they seem to keep gravitating toward bad churches, weak preaching, bad theology, social justice, some kind of charismatic mysticism, feminist tendencies and all the rest. Listen, parents, grandparents, don't play the game of pretending the childhood profession of faith is valid when sin, when spiritual lethargy, or indifference, has come to characterize those lives.

That which characterizes the life is a far truer indication of the actual heart condition than any prayer that that child prayed in childhood, verses memorized, service rendered, mission trips that they went on all throughout junior high, and high school and into college. Don't look at that superficial stuff. You want to know what a person believes, look at how they live. Don't just listen to what they say, look at how they live their life. That's what they believe.

It displeases Christ and it does our children and grandchildren no good at all when we refuse to think with discernment and understanding. And when we believe against all evidence that a childhood profession has saved them, when their lives show forth no spiritual energy, no spiritual excitement, no spiritual fruit. For you believers who are in the son or daughter category. Realize that your faith, the truth that you by your conversion have brought into the home in your speech, in your witness, in your testimony, the witness of your lifestyle. That may be leading to some turmoil and conflict. You might be doing, anything, not doing, you might not be doing anything

wrong, but then again you might be, so be careful not to become self-righteous.

Don't think that all the opposition that you're facing in your, even your unbelieving home is simply due to your bold commitment to Christ. Remember, realize, sanctification has had very little time to develop in your life. And now your sin is just covered over with spiritual words. To unbelieving, an unbelieving ear it can smack of hypocrisy, of Pharisaism. So be very quick to acknowledge your fault, to confess your sin, to ask unbelieving family members to forgive you for your sins. Against God, against them. Humility and the admission of guilt, the confession, and forsaking of sin, goes a long, long way toward preventing the appearance of hypocrisy and toward embedding within you a Pharisaic self-righteousness that so often accompanies young believers.

Alright so that's a first little point of application, just accept the spiritual reality of spiritual division. Acknowledge that it can happen in your home. It's a fact. Second point of application, embrace the reality of spiritual division by

clinging to God. Cling closely to God and not to your physical offspring. Cling to God and don't cling, try to cling to your flesh and blood family members. Don't try to hold everything together, don't try to keep the peace so you can avoid the tension. Don't try to keep everything, all these unbelievers, shepherded with you in the same direction.

Cling to God. Jesus in being specific here in listing all the different kinds, different levels of relational tensions in the home in verse 51-53 here. He, he was specific, but it does us good really as we've done, tried to do just a little bit, to stop and think about those various relationships in the home. As he listed them though, Jesus had another reason for being specific about listing these tensions and these various relationships.

Turn back to Micah chapter 7 and verse 6 because that's what Jesus was quoting from in Luke 12:53. Micah 7:6, he was quoting almost directly. And in Micah 7:6, we're going to look at the wider context, but starting in verse 5, Micah says there, Put "Put no trust in a neighbor, have no confidence in a

friend," Micah 7:5. "Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms. For the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man's enemies are the men of his own house."

So listen, whether neighbor, friend, the wife of your youth, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, spiritual issues are the deepest issues. And the division of that deep level will be revealed in allegiances and loyalties. When we, when we turn to Christ, we emerge from and grow apart from our unbelieving family members, and that may feel painful. That's going to hurt a bit. But look at what Micah says in verse 7. Having acknowledged the conflict and the division he says in verse 7, "But as for me I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me."

Listen, when conflicts arise, when family turns away from you, when family and friends, when they turn against us, when they marginalize us, when they don't want us around any longer, they don't even want to invite us to things, maybe they even



start gossiping about us, and slandering and persecuting us, listen, we need to cling to the Lord. We need to wait on God as Micah says here. We need to keep on pouring out our hearts to him, cast all your cares upon the Lord because he cares for you. God is the kindest, most compassionate father.

Jesus Christ is the greatest, strongest, most able, most perfect brother. The Spirit is the closest, most capable, ever present, comforter and counselor. Will God not in our times of pain and sadness over this spiritual division, will he not draw near to comfort and care for you? A child in his own family? The love of his heart? You who are the apple of his eye.

So acknowledge that spiritual division can be in your home, will be in your home when it shows up. Secondly, cling to God. And then third, third point of application, embrace the reality of spiritual division by preferring God's family over your physical family. Embrace the reality of spiritual division, and how do you do that? By preferring God's family over your physical family. This is where we have to apply this in priorities, decisions, lifestyle commitments, calendar

appointments. All this is going to reveal the conflict that comes because of spiritual division.

Since God is your father, Christ is your Lord, by the Spirit you have a new family of brothers and sisters, listen the bible says you need to treat them with a greater preference than your own flesh and blood. Spiritual kinship is deeper, and spiritual kinship lasts for eternity. This is what Jesus wants his disciples to consider, and to consider very carefully. It's what he wants us all to consider. He is setting our expectations, so that we can be resolved about what's, about doing what's right. And we resolve that before we get into the thick of conflict.

When it comes to our deepest relationships, who will we favor? Whose priorities set the direction for our lives? This application isn't explicit in Luke 12, but Jesus did make this application explicit in the parallel teaching in Matthew chapter 10. There he told his disciples in Matthew 10:35-37, he says "I've come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter in law against her mother-in-law, and,"

verse 36, "a person's enemies will be those of his own household." Okay, very similar, and this important warning in Matthew 10:37, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Sobering words.

If you love flesh and blood family more than Christ, you're not worthy of Christ. He's not just raising this issue as a matter of information. He's raising it as a matter of warning. How we deal with this tension, the tension that comes from our commitment to Christ, which puts us into conflict a collision course with unbelieving family members and their priorities, their expectations, their commitments, their calendar schedule, well that's going to test our loyalties and our decisions in the end are going to reveal our hearts.

Are we loyal to Christ or do we defer to the demands, preferences, sensitivities, feelings, priorities of unbelieving family members? To test that, let me raise a few for instances with you which I hope will be helpful. You have family members who are clear cut unbelievers, or perhaps they profess to be

Christians, but they don't live like it. And they believe that family events, birthdays, holidays, etcetera, all those events are higher priority than attending church and they say, "Look it's one Sunday, it's no big deal." Maybe your unbelieving family members will judge you for not protecting people from Covid infection, because you're attending church. They threaten not to allow in person visits if you're going to attend that church.

Grown children threaten to withhold time from your grandkids. Or older parents condemn younger parents for recklessness in their parenting, for putting their children in harms way by attending church during these dangerous Covid times. I saw a meme recently that said, "We urgently need a vaccine, people are dropping by the 0.0001s."

What do you think Christ wants you to do on the Lord's Day? What gives you a better testimony of your loyalty to Christ? To skip church for the sake of family, or to demonstrate through faithful church attendance that you have a higher Lord in your life. But family is a lesser priority than Christ and his

church, it's not a no priority, you love them. But Christ is the highest priority. He's your greatest devotion. He died to save you from your sins. And you, the least you can do is live a life of gratitude in submission, obedience, to his desire that you show up on the Lord's Day. That you give yourself to the local church. Feed on his word. Fellowship with the people for whom Christ died.

Another scenario is when you're unbelieving children are living through and experiencing the consequences of living by worldly priorities. And now they want your help in taking up the slack. In mitigating against the unpleasant effects of their lifestyles. You know how this works, they try to maintain a certain lifestyle so they insist on dual incomes in the home, or jobs that take them away from the home for many, many hours, and that means grandma is the daycare option. We need care for the kids, grandma needs time with the kids, this is a win-win for everybody right? Look, but because grandma is exhausted, she misses church, she misses bible study, she misses our on soul edifying Christian fellowship. Not just edification she needs for herself but the edification that others need from her. She's too exhausted to give it, she has nothing left. At her age,

chasing around all those little rugrats, she's exhausted. She needs to be there obeying the one another commands of scripture, and to have other people obey the one another commands of scripture on her.

Is it a righteous ordering of grandma's priorities, Christian priorities? Is it a good testimony to the unbelieving children and grandchildren, does it please Christ? I mean perhaps they ought to just live in the difficulty of the circumstances and the priorities that they have set for their life, because maybe that will push them to Christ. Keep in mind again what Jesus himself said, Beloved, Jesus' words, "Whoever loves Father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

Beloved, Jesus' words should ring in our ears when family members make these requests. Requests that strike them as innocent and reasonable, but they're reasoning through an unregenerate mind. For us, their requests can introduce subtle temptations to compromise Christian conviction, priority,



commitment, ministry. Jesus said in Luke 8:21, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

If we'll stand firm, lovingly, kindly, but listen, with no compromise. If we'll remain committed to the lordship of Christ. Preferring the spiritual eternal family of God over our physical temporal families, listen we will experience the presence and consequences of division in our home. But I'm going to be quick to add a fourth point of application. Just a brief word of encouragement. But don't let its brevity take away from its gravity, this is so vital.

We can rest in Christ's promise, Luke 12:8, that when we see the division, when we experience the conflict, and we prefer Christ over family, Jesus said Luke 12:8, "I tell you everyone who acknowledges me before men, the son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God." To have his imprimatur on your life at that time, you're not going to care about missing a few birthday parties.

You're not going to care about prioritizing church over your offended family members. When he says "This one I acknowledge before you my Father, before the angels in heaven. This one passes into the membership of the saints." All the pain, all the sorrow, all the sadness, all the conflict, it's going to be cast into its proper perspective, isn't it? And we're going to realize that this life was so very momentary. The time so, so fleeting. "Fear not," Jesus said, "Fear not little flock, it's your father's," emphasis on father, you're in a new family, "it's your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

So with that let's just pray now. Ask God for a holy resolve, that we cling closer to Christ, follow him as lord and prefer his family. Our father what Jesus has said here, and we do acknowledge him as our savior and our lord. We're so deeply grateful for him. But we acknowledge that what he says, it really does cut to the quick. It really does go down into the core of our identity and what we count as important, and who we count as precious to us. We love, we love our family members. We love them dearly. We want to see them saved and, and yet while we interact with them and they are unsaved and we're saved,





they're unrepentant, we're repentant, they're unbelieving, we're believing.

We see the division. We feel the tension. We sometimes experience subtle conflict and sometimes experience grave conflict. And father we ask for the lives and the souls of our family members. We want to see them know Christ like we do. We want to see them as a part of your eternal family. We want to see them one day before the throne, bowing down, worshipping, and for all of eternity, joining in service and fellowship with you, and with your son Jesus Christ.

But we pray that we would not long for that so much that we compromise our commitment to Christ and our convictions about truth, about priority, about lifestyle. Father many of us feel so weak on this point. Many of us have , we have compromised, we have given in to the demands of unbelieve, of the unbelieving, because they're close to us, because we want to hold them close. We think that by compromising one more time maybe they'll listen to us. Father help us to, to not, not think about outcomes. Not think about results, but just help us to think about what does

righteousness look like right now. Help us to do that. Help us to live for the pleasure of Christ. Help us to fear you. And help us to leave the results to you by your Spirit and by your Word. We commit this to you father in the name of Christ and ask for your blessing to come upon us. As we deal with difficult, complex, situations in our homes, but we're we wouldn't have it any other way father because this means that we belong to you. So grateful to have our sin forgiven. So grateful to be covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It's in his name that we pray. Amen.