

Title: WHEN JESUS IS NOT MEEK AND GENTLE, LUKE 12:49-53
(Chatham, NJ; 8/14/16, AM) [Pd – Topical]

Theme: Jesus' statements about fire and division reflect the side of his character and message that doesn't fit with the image of "Jesus meek and gentle."

Purpose: To remind everyone that Jesus is both an appealing savior to the downtrodden but also a divisive figure to the world and its sinful ways.

Introduction:

1. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem for a showdown with evil and death, 9:51.
2. According to the passage before us today, his journey involves casting fire on the earth, 49, and experiencing a baptism (of suffering), 50.
3. He refers to the fire of judgment and the baptism of his crucifixion.
4. His words reflect a Jesus who is more than a really nice, kind man whose sole mission in life is to help the poor: that is a manageable image that does not threaten most people.
5. That is a Jesus de-clawed: he is devoid of power to convict the world of sin.

I. Bringing the Prophetic Voice to the Present

A. The prophets of old

1. Isaiah 5:1-7 describes the vineyard (a metaphor for Israel) producing only spoiled grapes: bloodshed and unrighteousness
2. God comes and destroys the vineyard
3. Jeremiah 23 excoriates the prophets who prophesy lies; verse 29 describes God's word like fire and like a hammer against them
4. When Micah endured criticism from his countrymen, he responded, "Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?" (2:7)
5. The Word of God to their listeners resounded with threats of judgment.

B. Simeon's prophesy, Luke 2:25 - 35

1. On the day of Jesus' circumcision and dedication, Mary and Joseph are approached by an old man, "waiting for the consolation of Israel," 25.
2. His words sounded ominous, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed," 34, and "the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed," 35
3. When the Word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword, pierces to the inner soul of man, many resist, run, and rebel
4. God's word exposes men for the sinners that they are

II. In Rebel-Held Territory (we must remember where our journey takes us)

A. Rebels react to righteousness

1. Gideon tore down the altars to Baal (his father had built them), Judges 6:25-31
2. The town is outraged: Gideon challenges their unrighteousness
3. Jesus' own did not receive his message, John 1:11
4. Acts 2:37, Peter's preaching "cut to the heart."
5. Perhaps this is why rebels continue to resist: God's word convicts them of sin

B. Appeals to the unrighteous

1. The role of the Holy Spirit: to convict the world of sin, John 16:8
2. Jesus' role on the cross was to offer forgiveness
3. Acts 3:26, Peter says that turning people away from wickedness is a blessing
4. The blessing must be preceded by an admission of guilt and wickedness

C. Not peace but division, Luke 12:51

1. Matthew 10:34 says, "not peace but a sword"
2. Conflict even within the family, 52-53
3. Micah experienced the same thing, 7:5-7
4. It is a sad state of affairs that sin resides so deeply as to cause divisions within the closest relationships

III. The Time of God's Coming

- Jesus sums up with a warning
- His listeners could not recognize what was happening right in front of them
- They could read the weather signs but missed the spiritual ones, 54-56
- Jesus calls them hypocrites for their lack of insight
- In 19:41-44, he mourns their destruction because of this lack

Conclusion:

1. Jesus does not validate the ways of the world; he challenges them.
2. This is why they resisted him.
3. It is mostly why people resist today.
4. God's word is a fire that judges and purifies.
5. Though we are respectful in our dealings with people, our beliefs and ways will create disturbances wherever they are explained.
6. We must be realistic in our expectations about this.
7. Our challenge today to accept the judgment against your sins, accept the grace that is offered, and experience the joy that it brings.