

HOUSE DIVIDED // Luke 12:49-53

Message from series, The Gospel of Luke

This passage from Luke 12 demonstrates the spiritual divisions of families when some members have become followers of Christ and others reject him.

Main Idea: The cross of Jesus will divide the most intimate of relationships when nothing else will.

How do we stay encouraged and faithful while living in a divided home?

Four Reminders:

1. The cross divides the whole world (v. 49)

Divisions in the home are a microcosm of the divided world. In verse 49 Jesus uses the imagery of fire—everything will either be cleaned and refined by the fire of the gospel; or it is combustible and will be consumed. Every soul is on one side or the other of this divide. We must feel the brokenness in our own homes, but also for the brokenness of the world, and allow it to move us to compassion and evangelism.

2. Jesus died for gospel division (v. 50)

If the key word in verse 49 is fire, the key word in verse 50 is baptism. This is not a baptism of water but of blood; we are looking not just at the effect of the cross on the world, but the effect of the cross on Jesus himself. Verses like 1 John 4:10 point to how Jesus is the sacrifice, a propitiation—he became the wrath-bearer for our sin. He lived his entire earthly life with Gethsemane in view—everything was pointing to Jerusalem and the cross. Jesus is expressing a desire to have this task already accomplished—because it is not until he becomes the atoning sacrifice that our salvation can be achieved.

How is all this an encouragement? Praise God that there is a division and we are not all drowned in the wrath of God.

3. Jesus said division would come (v. 51-52)

If there is division in your house, it is not about you—your family may blame you, but it is really about Jesus. We may sense conflict between this passage and those like Luke 2, in which the angels proclaim “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.” What Jesus is pointing to is that there cannot be peace on earth until there is peace in the heart, made possible by the cross. The cross is a scandalous reality—people don’t want to hear the message that what you truly need is free, bought by someone else and all you have to do is humble yourself.

At the same time, the division that Jesus speaks of is a passive division. Scripture never says he wants to bring division; he does not seek it. But division is the result of corrupt hearts faced with who Jesus is.

4. What Jesus divides he can also unite (v. 53)

To be at peace with God is to be at war with others. We may have been at peace with our friends and families when we were at war with God, but that will be reversed when we become followers of God. Why are families divided? They are divided because of Christian beliefs, Christian practices, Christian morals, and Christian convictions.

But there is hope for the family. My family may turn against me, but I will never turn against my family. We don’t lose hope for our family because our hope is in Christ, the only one capable a truly uniting divided hearts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you been impacted by spiritual divisions in your family? How has Jesus encouraged you through this challenge?
2. How is fire an apt metaphor for the effects of the gospel? How does this passage illustrate the division between those who accept and find salvation in the gospel of Jesus and those who reject it?
3. What steps can we take to remind ourselves of the full picture of the work of Christ—that he who divides also unites; that he whose gospel brings division also brings unity?