

## Caution Ahead: *Peaceful Divide* Luke 12:41-53

**Introduction:** Mother's Day is a day that cuts both ways. It is a day that we joyfully celebrate our moms for their sacrifice, faithfulness, and nurturing care that they gave to us. We recognize that without a mom, none of us would be here, and oftentimes our moms have made the greatest impact in our lives. We will take you out to lunch today, confessing our affections through the written word (and keeping Hallmark in business), and giving you gifts that are equal to you beauty and strength (basically flowers). But there is another side to this day of joyful expression of thanks, and though this first part is real, the other side really hurts. It is the stark reality that life is not all about flowers, cards, and peace. Moms today feel the strain of loss, of disappointment, and of division. Amid the laughter and thanksgiving, there will be tears of sorrow, thoughts of regret, and painful present realities.

We come to a passage like this one and part of me wants to avoid it on Mother's Day, and another part of me wants to avoid it altogether. It is a passage about the reality of life in a fallen world, the power of the gospel to change and at the same time the message that if rejected, condemns. It is a passage that immediately throws us into tension as we are conflicted with the world we desire and the truth of the world we live. This is a passage that cuts both ways, giving us hope, filling us with awe, motivating us by honor and responsibly, yet realizing that so many have not, cannot, and will not see the same treasure and will instead find judgment.

So today, on this Mother's Day, we embrace this tension filled day as a microcosm of a tension filled life, and we find solace in a Savior Jesus who felt the same tension and perfectly balanced the realities of redemption and wrath, reward and consequence, blessing and curse.

Jesus has been **prepping His disciples in this discourse**, for the harsh realities they would face. He started to beware of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and not to fear man over God. He made them aware of their drift toward greed and covetousness, and that leading to anxiety, worry, and treasuring the wrong thing. From there He transitioned to a call to be ready at the imminent but unknown timing of the master's return, preparing for Jesus' sure second coming. Jesus now picked up that thought and carried the parable of a master and servants in response to Peter's question '*Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?*' Jesus answered that question, but not as directly as Peter (or we) might have hoped. He tells a tale, a parable of two possible outcomes of a servant waiting for the master to come (like the one returning from a wedding in 12:36-40). What we see in Jesus' response is there are really only two responses, each one carrying with it a reward or consequence.

### **A Tale of Two Responses to Entrusted News**

"Peter said, 'Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

**Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.**

But, if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and **put him with the unfaithful**. And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get **ready** or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. but the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating.

**Everyone to whom much was given of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, much they will demand the more."**

### **A Wise Response: *Life & Reward***

The first group are those who are **faithful and sensible**, who live out the reality of salvation in all of life. This group lives with a sense of **urgency**, knowing that there are only so many days to be obedient and faithful. They are willing to oversee others (especially those that are made disciples - the fruit of faithful evangelism and relationship), and are willing to see themselves first and foremost servants of the King (no greater title to possess). In a world where pastors are seen as celebrities and anyone who believes there is a God is considered a Christian, true faithfulness shows itself by **humble, consistent, tireless, God glorifying work** that comes from the work of Jesus on the cross and the Spirit that empowers. This servant not only receives the reward of eternity with Christ, but reward of responsibility

### **A Faithless Response: *Death & Punishment***

This faithful servant is juxtaposed with the example of the faithless servant. This one was a charlatan, feigning to be a servant but was truly in it for himself. While the master was away he acted like there was no master except him (call it "practical atheism"). Believing that he could live by his own rules, treat others by his own standards, and live for his own pleasure, this servant abused those around him (beating the other servants) and indulged as a hedonist (getting drunk). It was "eat, drink, and be merry", but also was living the American dream with no thought or care of Christ's return. There was a profession of faith by no change, no transformation, no salvation.

Jesus teaches **2 important principles about this servant:**

- 1)** This servant who acted this way in light of the masters return, who acted in His own interest and according to his own will, will be "cut to pieces and put with the unfaithful". In other words this servant was NOT going to taste the wedding feast with the master, but would find himself outside of God's house and in a place of judgment
- 2)** All unfaithful servants would be judged, sentenced to life outside of eternity with God, but there were be differing levels of severity. The first who knew and actively opposed would be cut to pieces. The one who knew the masters will and was passive toward God's will and Jesus' return would receive a beating, and the one who was ignorant to all and acted in unbelief received a light beating. What does this all mean? It means that all received judgment, for there is no salvation without faith, yet it was those who **KNEW** the truth and acted contrary to it, they received the most severe punishment. With much information, with much opportunity, with all the resources available, the unfaithful servant should not only have lived out what he knew, but should have informed those who were under his charge.

This context has to do with the Jewish people, its leaders and those who knew better and yet high-handedly rebelled, others more passively, while some were without knowledge (like the Samaritan people). *Where do we see the same categories of people who reject today? Those who have heard and yet live like practical atheist, those who have heard and trust their own morality, and those who still have not heard the full and complete message?*

This leaves us with the indelible principle:

**Principle:** To whom much is **entrusted**, much is demanded, to whom much is given, much is required

What does that mean for us? We have been entrusted with a great treasure (1 Tim. 1:11).

"...the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient...in accordance with the **glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted**" 1 Tim. 1:11

"But I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard until that Day what has been **entrusted** to me....By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the **good deposit entrusted** to you." 2 Tim. 1:12, 14

"...what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust** to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2:2

We have access to God's Word, to teaching, and a proliferation of information. We are not uninformed as to the return of Christ, and know what happens in the end. The question is: what are we doing with it? Are we striving for easy lives without risk? Are we reveling in ignorance by not pursuing God through His Word? Are we living in a way that believes Jesus could return at any moment, not in fear, but in hopeful anticipation? We have been entrusted with much, and that is both an **honor** and brings with it much **responsibility**.

### A Tension Filled Response to the Entrusted News

"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! **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 mother-in-law."

### Tension brought by Jesus' baptism by fire

In almost a break from the discourse, Jesus continued to speak to His disciples but spoke as an aside as He considered what laid before Him. He spoke with both anticipation and distress, both of wanting time to move along to get to the cross and the tension of facing the cross. Jesus was not distressed by the shadow of the cross only in the Garden of Gethsemane. The cross loomed large in His thinking from this time forward, knowing what had to be done. He spoke of both **fire and baptism**, which we know referred to His suffering and work on the cross. In **Mark 10:38**, the request came to Him from James and John to sit next to Him on His right and left in glory. Jesus responded by saying, '*are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?*' He was directly referring to not only His death on the cross, but becoming the propitiation for our sin, becoming the object of God's wrath and drinking the cup of judgment. This was the baptism that the disciples could not share with Him.

But He also spoke of casting fire to earth. Fire is one of those things that cuts both ways:

- **Purifies**

Fire purifies. If one wants to sterilize a medical instrument or kill the bacteria on something, it must be killed by heat. Fire is what is necessary to redeem something overcome by a parasite. By satisfying God's wrath on the cross, Jesus purified His children, bringing many sons to glory (Heb. 1:3) It is by fire

that Jesus can purify us from sin, redeeming us from death. This is what He anticipated and longed to accomplish on the cross.

- **Consumes**

But there is another side of fire, when it is unleashed, destroys. It consumes and leaves devastation in its wake. In Scripture, fire is what brings judgment, and is God's instrument to do so. This is the side that gave Jesus pause and distress, the same way it does us. The exact same death on the cross refined and redeemed some but brought judgment on others.

This is the tension that people have with Jesus. We like when Jesus presents Himself as compassionate, loving and kind, but are not sure about the Jesus that we see talking about judgment. I remember talking to a person at the park a few years ago and they asked me if I thought there were two authors of the Psalms: one that speaks of love, the other that spoke about seeking justice against enemies. I thought it was a funny question but an understandable one. We have tension when our preconceived ideas of Jesus are challenged. We have to see Jesus the way He really is, the way He is in Scripture.. He is a loving God, compassionate, gracious, who was willing to die for those He called, but also willing to "cut to pieces" those who are found unfaithful. If we have a hard time with this, buckle up for the next statement:

### **Tension brought by Jesus' finished accomplishment**

*Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."*

- **Peace**

When we think about Jesus, we rightfully think of peace. We have the Christmas hymns ringing in our ears "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace** among those with whom He is pleased". His is called the Prince of peace (Isa. 9:6), and was to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:79). Jesus Himself said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you* (John 14:27). Did this statement by Jesus nullify this peace? By no means. Jesus brings peace through His blood on the cross. He brings those who were enemies of the cross to a right, satisfied, and free relationship with each other. Jesus offers a peace offering in Himself to brings those who hated the light (John 3:19).

- **Division**

But there is the other side of this equation, that this peace He brings through the gospel immediately sets at odds against those who are still at war. It is much like the story of Hiroo Onoda, a Japanese intelligence officer stationed in the Philippines at the conclusion of WWII and Japan's surrender in 1945. Onoda held out in the mountains conducting guerilla tactics and evading local authorities until his former commanding officer travelled to officially relieve him of his duty. This was in 1974! Peace was made, but division continued.

The gospel brings division. Jesus described this division at the most fundamental and intimate of levels, in the family unit. In Jewish families, a son or daughter would often marry and move in or add on to the family home. There was a tight relationship between father and son, often with the son carrying on the family business or practice, while the mother of the house would train the daughter and daughter in law to manage the family home. To divide a home would mean leaving not just a location, but would radically change every relationship, everything one was ever taught, and all they had been raised with. Jesus said in following Him, in embracing His peace, it would divide one from the most intimate and close relationship.

We see this happen today. In some Jewish homes today, if a son converts to Christianity, the family may perform a "funeral" for him, since he is dead to them. In Islamic cultures, a convert away from Islam AT BEST is shunned completely, but we have had friends in other countries where a hit was put on their life, sometimes by their own father. The gospel divides because it requires our entire loyalty, affection, and commitment to Christ alone, even when it is in opposition to what our family believes or in how we were raised. Jesus said that in coming to Him, it would put us in tension with the world, and we needed to be prepared for this.

**Principle:** Faithful response to the entrusted gospel brings peace, but immediately begins to divide relationships

There are several implications to this principle that we must be aware of:

- **We must have the right view of love and the gospel** - In the name of love, we can easily take the path of least resistance, knowing that none of us like confrontation. Some believe that if we simply take the right approach or entry gate, if we simply soften the blow of the gospel by being kind, compassionate, or culturally savvy, we can cause people to like us and our message. The gospel is by nature **offensive**, and we must speak this truth IN love. The most loving thing to do is to tell a friend that their life is heading to destruction, but that message has high probability of causing division.
- **We must be aware of the possibility of division so we do not artificially lower the standard** - In the name of unity or fellowship (in a church or family), we may be tempted to simply lower the standard of the gospel. Maybe if someone simply believes in God or knows the name Jesus, they are saved. Maybe if we say some sins are acceptable, or are simply more culturally normative, we can redefine the gospel to include more people. But Jesus was clear that the way of salvation is the narrow path, and few find it. This gospel necessarily brings division, and though we do not love this, it is the truth
- **We must not create MORE division than necessary** - The division created must be generated BY THE GOSPEL, not by us. Notice here that the division should be generated by others, not the believer. The ones we are to ever separate from (1 Cor. 5) are those who claim to be believers but continue to walk in perpetual, unrepentant sin. Though we are to be separated in action and desire from the world, we are not to separate from those that we are called to love. However, though we will accept people and love them, we will NOT APPROVE of their life nor CONDONE their actions as good and right. This means that when we love but don't approve, others may divide from us. This means we must be **wise** in our approach, **humble** in our heart, and **appropriate** in our actions. We are no better than anyone, we don't have artificially better morality, but we do offer a better Jesus, and that is always the point of contention.
- **We must make sure that tension remains** - There will always be tension in this, and there should be. Our hearts should ache for those who don't know Christ, knowing that we are to urge and beg those to be reconciled with God. We should feel the tension of speaking the truth in love. We should feel the tension of bringing the peace of the gospel and the inevitable division it brings.

This brings us full circle to Mother's Day. Many feel the weight this morning of those whom you love that have hardened their heart to the Lord. These are on our mind and heart, and though we have the joy of Christ, we always carry a nagging sense of sorrow for those that we are divided from. That is why

we pray earnestly this morning praying for those close to us for salvation this Mother's Day. Would you join me in that prayer.

**Questions to Discuss:**

- Where do we see the three categories of those who are like the faithless servant?
- What does it mean for us that we have been entrusted much (with the gospel)? What is required? How does that affect our life?
- Where do we feel the tension of peace and division in our life and relationships? How about in the larger evangelical community?
- What are other misconceptions about Jesus that we have, when we create Him in our own image instead of His description in the Bible?
- What do we need to be careful of when dealing with those who are divided from us?