

Sunday Sermon: September 8, 2019

Sermon Text: Luke 12:49-53

Sermon Theme: Be Prepared: The Word of God Divides

“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! ⁵¹ Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

With all the talk of the hurricane this past week maybe you heard any one of the major news outlets tell people to prepare themselves and their households before the storm. What were some of the things that they needed to get for themselves to be prepared? Non-perishable food, plenty of water, candles, flashlights, batteries..... and other things.

When someone tells us to prepare we should. Still, we know that there will be those people who did not prepare for the hurricane. They are the ones that didn't listen to the warnings, that didn't go to the store, that didn't take the advice that they should have. After this hurricane is done there will be stories of people who need to be rescued because they did not listen and they did not prepare as they should have.

A hurricane can be devastating. They cause lot of destruction, but they are not the worst thing that can happen to us. There is something much more powerful. When the devil comes to tempt us to walk away from our God, these temptations can be far more devastating and dangerous than any hurricane and more deadly to our faith.

Like the news outlets, God's Word has warning that we should listen to and prepare ourselves for. This morning God wants us to be prepared for the response we receive from others for living our faith in a world that is sinful. He wants us to be ready, to be prepared, because the Word of God will divide true believers from others.

The big word today is diversity. We are to embrace diversity and then we will have unity. Isn't that a strange thing to say, it is a contradiction. To have unity we have to embrace diversity. The basic thought is this: if we are good enough at being accepting, loving, and non-judgmental, then we will all live happily ever after.

Even churches are getting into this thought. If just throw out those doctrines that cause us trouble and don't agree on. If we are good enough at being accepting, loving and non-judgmental, if we are just able to set aside some of those problem doctrines, all churches will come to an agreement and we will be able to live happily ever after.

These are both nice thoughts, however, Jesus speaks a different truth in his Word. He gives us a loving warning that his Word, when taught truthfully will prick hearts and consciences, and will divide those who listen to it and follow it and those who don't. **“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. ⁵² From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”**

We don't often hear Jesus speak this way do we? We don't often hear Jesus use a tone of warning like this. If we really study the Bible, we will quickly find that Jesus is telling the truth. In many cases, the Word of God divided believers from others in very clear ways.

In Genesis, we see that holding to the Word of God caused division between Cain and Abel. Cain killed Abel because he hated his brother for his faith and trust in God and he hated that God blessed Cain because of his faith. This hatred continued. There was a clear division between the faithful from Seth's line and the unfaithful from Cain's line.

The Word continued to divide first Abraham from the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other kings of Canaan. It divided the Israelites from the idols of the Egyptians then from the idols of the Canaanites.

In our first lesson this morning we heard the division between God's true prophet Jeremiah who was preaching of God's judgment on his unfaithful people and the other prophets who were prophesying peace and security for Judah. Jeremiah was arrested for speaking the truth of God.

We see the division Jesus is talking about in his own life. If there was a time that the Word of God should have brought peace and unity, it was when Jesus was preaching and teaching. But instead of that, what do we see? We see division, and not peace. Many of the Jews did not believe the message that Jesus brought. The Pharisees and chief priests had Jesus arrested and then killed for his message.

Jesus says his Word will divide. In Matthew 10 Jesus says his Word is like a sword. The writer to Hebrews explains more about this sword. **For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** ¹³ **And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

The Word does not divide because it is such a terrible message. On the contrary, we need the Law and Gospel in our lives to show us our sin and need for a Savior and what our Savior has done for us in our lives. The Word divides because it shows us something about ourselves that we don't want to hear. The Word divides because it cuts past all of the lies we tell ourselves about how good we are, how much God should love us, or how much we deserve God's heaven. It shows us our sinfulness by cutting to our hearts and showing us that, **"Every inclination of man's heart is evil from childhood."**

Another thing we don't want to hear is that our sins have consequences. We don't want to hear that there is punishment when we sin against God, **"The wages of sin is death."** We want to hear that we are good people, who try hard.

God's Word teaches us a lesson that we did not learn in school, or when we were with your friends, or maybe not even from our mother. The truth of the Word is that, by nature, we are not good. We are lost and condemned sinners who need help.

Another way that the Word divides is to tell us that there is only one answer to sin. Yet, we want to find our own answer to sin. We might try to change God's Word so that a sin is no longer a sin, it won't change God's definition of sin. We may try to be good, but it won't change God's judgment on any and all sin. We may think that we can hide our sin from our God and he won't see it. But our God is a God who sees all. The Word shows us that the only answer for sin is in the perfect life and innocent death of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

There are very few things today that have one answer. In fact, the whole phrase, thinking outside the box, was created because there always has to be a different answer however unorthodox or strange it might seem. But not here. In his Word, God tells us that there is only one answer to sin. That is through a Savior who has lived perfectly and died for us that are sins are forgiven. It is through Jesus and only through Jesus, that our sins are forgiven and we are free to live a life of thanks to God for the blessings he has given to us.

God warns us to be prepared because the Word can even divide families. The last thing the devil wants is a family which is joined together around the Word. Even in families that hold to the Word, the devil can lead people away from the truth of the Word. The devil can and does tempt us to think that sexuality and biology is fluid instead of set according to God's eternal standard. He can tempt us life isn't all that important, we can get rid of it if it is inconvenient. He can tempt us to think that one religion is as good as another, or that no religion is as good as religion. Any of these sinful thoughts can and do cause division in families because the Word divides those who believe and hold to the Word and those who don't.

The blessing in knowing that the Word that divides is also the Word that strengthens us and prepares us to stand in faith. Those in the way of the hurricane had to prepare by getting the essential supplies and food. How do we, who are in the hurricane of a sinful world filled with temptation prepare? We can stock up on the essentials of the truth of God's Word so that we are not caught unprepared when this happens.

In our second lesson we have that wonderful picture of the Word of God acting as armor against the attacks of the devil, the world and our flesh. God's Word does not become armor by a Bible sitting on our shelf or because we go to church once a year.

The Word becomes armor when we are actively listening to the Word in church, when we are actively learning the Word in Bible class and when we are striving for more of the Word in our personal and private Bible study. Our faith gets stronger the more we are in the Word.

It is through the Gospel in the Word that the Holy Spirit prepares us by making us strong in faith so that we can battle the temptations of the devil on a daily basis and so that we can be prepared for the problems that will come because his Word will divide us from others.

It is through that Word that God brings us peace and comfort for the times that we live in and strength to stand against the devil's temptations standing firm in God's Word. It is in the Word that we are given strength, not to live in sin, but in the forgiveness and freedom that is ours through Jesus.

We see in Jesus' words for this morning that his Word will divide the believer from all others. The Word also strengthens and prepares us to stand firm and faith. May God grant us his Holy Spirit to bring us back to the Word again and again, to strengthen us today and always.