

CONVERSATION GUIDE

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon on "Mere Generosity."
2. What convicted you, surprised you, or made you stop and think? What topic or comment brought up by the preacher made you say, "I hadn't thought of that?"

This week's sermon topic is "Hard Words." In this week's passages, Jesus teaches some hard lessons regarding the price of following Him and the judgment that ultimately awaits those who fail to repent and obey God.

READ Luke 12:49-53 and Luke 13:6-9

DISCUSS and REFLECT

Many people, including many Christians, prefer the image of a gentle and kind Jesus, healing the sick, forgiving sins, gently cajoling His disciples when they stumble, submitting obediently to the cross. These passages reveal a different side of Jesus, the Jesus who will ultimately bring judgment and whose Gospel will even divide families.

As William Barclay says in his commentary on the Luke 12 passage, "The essence of Christianity is that loyalty to Christ has to take precedence over the dearest loyalties of this earth."¹

Luke 12:49-53

Read also the parallel passage in Matthew (Matt 10:34-36.) Both of these passages quote Old Testament prophesy (see Micah 7:6.)

In v. 49, Jesus says "I have come to cast fire upon the earth." In Scripture, fire is usually an image of judgment.

- What judgment is Jesus referring to here, and when will it come?

But Jesus also says, "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10.)" And John says, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:17.)" These seem quite different from saying that He came to "cast fire."

- How are we to reconcile those two very different mission statements?

In Matt 10:34 Jesus says, "I did not come to bring peace but a sword." The sword represents division, and indeed that very word is used in our parallel

study verse (Luke 12:51). He goes on to say that it is families that will be divided, family member against family member.

- Why must this happen? (Note: See Luke 14:26 and Luke 9:59-62.) Discuss in light of the Barclay quote above.

In both of these parallel passages in Luke and Matthew, Jesus explicitly says He did not come to bring peace. Contrast this with John 14:27 ("Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.")

- How are we to reconcile this Jesus with the Jesus of Luke 12:51 and Matt 10:34 who denies that He came to bring peace?

(Hint: To whom is the message directed in each case, and what kind of peace is being referred to?)

Luke 13:6-9

Barclay's commentary on this passage is headed "*The Gospel of the Other Chance and the Threat of the Last Chance.*" "Here is a parable," he says, "(that is) at one and the same time lit by grace and closely packed with warnings."²

As is often the case when Jesus uses a parable, each of the things and people mentioned is a metaphor for something or someone.

- Whom or what do you think the vineyard, the fig tree, the vineyard owner, and the vine-keeper are intended to represent? (Hint: See Isaiah 5:1-7 and Micah 7:1-2.)

In the accounts of the cursing of the fig tree in Matthew 21:18-22 and Mark 11:12-14, the fig tree dies immediately, but in this parable the tree is given another chance. Barclay refers to "the gospel of the second chance" and "the threat of the last chance" as being two of the main teachings of this passage.³

- What do you see as the primary *application* of this passage to us and the church today?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Other than the fact that Jesus sometimes used "hard words", what do you see as the key takeaway from these two seemingly very different passages?

MEMORIZE

Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division. (Luke 12:51)

¹ Barclay, William, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1953), 202.

² *Ibid.*, 207

³ *Ibid.*, 208-9