

Title: Taking Sides  
Text: Luke 12.49-53  
Theme: Christ is worth and demands supreme loyalty  
Series: Luke  
Prop Stmtnt: Christ is worth a costly obedience.

Read Text:

A little over 81 years ago, 156,000 allied troops crossed the English Channel in Operation Overlord and landed on the shores of France to begin the liberation of Western Europe from the tyranny of the Nazis. Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword were unknown beaches of Normandy that overnight became part of our history. The soldiers drilled and trained for months, never knowing when the real event would happen, but knowing it would. Many movies have attempted to recreate the crossing of the soldiers in those landing crafts. Some of them were hit with artillery and mines and sank before they made it to shore. What may have initially seemed like an adventure and a challenge to these soldiers answering the call of duty was now deadly serious. They huddled, some prayed, some panicked. This was life or death.

Luke 11, 12 and 13 has a similar feel. For the disciples, the initial sense of adventure and excitement in following Jesus has now taken on a feeling of weight and seriousness. Whereas Jesus had been received with joy for his miracles and hunger for his teaching, he is now met with more and more confrontation and conflict. He knows what is in store for him. He knows where this road is leading. In Luke 13.22 we read, *He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.* We now know what this means. Jesus is getting closer to the bend in the road where he starts walking toward Jerusalem, toward the cross. For Jesus, this was not life or death, it was life through death. It was our life through his death. What happens in Jerusalem is grief and glory. It is death and resurrection. It is rejection and salvation. This is summarized in our text.

Luke's gospel gives us a complete view of Jesus. Many of you are realizing that the real Jesus of the Bible is not quite the same Jesus of contemporary Christianity. I do not want you to believe in and follow a fake Jesus. Only Jesus can save you, but the Jesus you trust in has to be the Jesus who is. Beloved, following Christ is deadly serious. The cost of our salvation was the offering up of the life of Christ in death by crucifixion.

Here is what I am aiming to help you understand and to convince you to believe with your whole being:

- 1) The death of Christ was the greatest tragedy, grief, agony and sorrow ever. The infinitely righteous, Son of God, became sin for us and bore the wrath of God against our sin, until it was accomplished.

- 2) And, it was accomplished. It was finished. He paid it all. The death of Christ purchased our salvation. He bought forgiveness for us and brought life to us, free from condemnation, free from separation, free from judgment, free from fear forever.
- 3) Since the death of Christ was so unimaginably intense and so grievous, it must mean that the salvation he bought was so amazing and so glorious. Jesus would not have died for us if it wasn't worth it. The price that he paid is beyond our ability to grasp, which means that the salvation he accomplished is even more beyond our ability to grasp.
- 4) Only those who believe in Christ and trust in Him completely belong to him. There is a massive gap between those who believe in Christ and those who do not. There is a division (separation) between the two and that division often runs right through families. Earthly families will be divided over Christ, but his forever family will never be separated. Jesus bought and paid for his forever family by offering up his perfect life to pay for our sins.

This means that his rejection and death were worth whatever he endured because he accomplished for us the greatest thing we could ever be given. The rejection and death of Christ brings unimaginable grief and agony, and it secures unimaginable glory and joy. The grief and agony are real, but temporary. The glory and joy are even greater and forever. As we study the life of Christ and we get closer and closer to Jerusalem we will feel the weight of his rejection, the growing burden of his sorrow, and the increase of his revulsion of what he will endure. We will hear him repeatedly tell us that following him is not easy, but it is worth it. What he endured was not easy, but it was worth it. Therefore, following him is not easy, but it is worth it.

One of the factors that contributed to the rejection of Christ is his teaching on power and how it related to his mission and kingdom. The people then, wanted power now. They wanted glory, success and standing, now. They wanted a Jesus (Messiah) who would give them a health, wealth and power gospel. When it became clear that Jesus was not giving them what they wanted, they turned on him. Unlike Satan who lies to you and then switches the price tags, Jesus tells you the truth up front. Our text is a theology of pain now, power later. Distress now, glory later. Our Savior went to the cross. Following Christ is not easy, but it is worth it.

#### 1. **What Jesus came to do was hard, but worth it.** (49-50)

What is the subtle grammatical change between v.49 and v.50? In v.49 Jesus is talking about what he has come to do (active voice) and in v.50 he talks about what is going to happen to him (passive voice). In v.49 he is doing the acting and in v.50 he is being acted on. What Jesus came to do is directly related in some way to something overwhelming happening to him.

Jesus said, *"I came to cast fire on the earth."* "I came" is referring to his actual coming to the earth. Here is a mission statement from Jesus about his purpose for coming. In Luke 5.32, Jesus said, *"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* Then in Luke 19.10, *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* Jesus came to call sinners to repentance and

to seek and save the lost. He also came to cast fire on the earth. His mission to save people is not in conflict with his mission to cast fire on the earth. They are both his mission. Jesus came to judge and to save. (pic) When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus in John 3, Jesus said, *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already."* The world is already condemned by its rebellion. As the Judge, Jesus came to make us aware of our condemnation. Jesus consistently uses the term fire as an expression of judgment. It is also an expression tied to the refining ministry of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and with fire. That prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Jesus came to provide...

#### **A. Salvation through Judgment (49)**

Here is why the message and ministry of Christ was so controversial that he was crucified and why it is still controversial. Everyone wants to be rescued. We all want to be rescued from our circumstances. We all want our health, finances, grades, job, vehicle, families, baseball teams, to be better. We all want to be rescued from meaningless lives, dead-end relationships, disobedient children, natural disasters as well as the consequences of our own decisions. When we think of Jesus "taking the wheel" we want him to keep us from crashing so our lives aren't so lousy. But Jesus did not fundamentally come to save you from your circumstances, but to save you from your sin. That means that Jesus came to save you from yourself and your self-rule. Here is the tension and it is huge. We all want to be rescued, but few of us are willing to admit that we are sinners who rightly deserve the judgment of God. But that is the truth about each of us. Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost. But only those who are willing to humble themselves and admit their lostness will ever turn to Christ for rescue. We are all lost because we have chosen to go off the path of following God and go our own way. Jesus came as the perfect and final prophet from God. He warned people about sin. He came to judge sin. As our Savior, he died on the cross and took upon himself the judgment that we deserved. He did that for everyone who would believe on him. Those who believe on him are those who realize that they are condemned by their own sin. The fire that Jesus came to cast was the fire of judgment that separated the believers from the non-believers. The baptism of fire also referred to the event on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit launched the church by identifying the true believers through tongues of fire that appeared on the heads of the 120 followers of Christ who were gathered together that day. True believers are spared the judgment of God against their sin because their sin has already been judged in Christ. The rest face the fire of God's judgment. Jesus is the Judge who brought salvation by being judged in our place and receiving our judgement. Jesus came to do this and he tells us that he came to do this. This is who Jesus is.

I heard a bank ad on the radio this week that promised a wonderful product but in the last 3 seconds a digitally compressed voice buzzed through a 400-word disclaimer that sounded like it was taking back everything the first part of the ad promised. Jesus does not do that us. He does not hide the hard truths from us nor blur them by fast talking. The real Jesus is both Judge and Savior. He came to cast fire and he came to die. Those who heard his warnings and took them to heart realized that the only way for them to be saved was through Christ.

Now, that is offensive to most people and I'm guessing that some of you are offended by that. People were offended by what Jesus said and were so angered by his exposing their sin that they connived to crucify him. You really have to hate someone intensely to scheme for their death by crucifixion. But they did. Why? Why would someone hate someone else so deeply that they plotted for that person to be publicly shamed, humiliated and tortured in order to cause the maximum amount of pain over the longest amount of time? That is deep hatred. Why did that they do that? They did it because the ministry of Jesus consistently held up an CT-scan that showed the soul and the results were ugly. Were those people who condemned Jesus an unusual small group of sub-humans, like psychopathic Nazis or sociopathic criminals? No. They simply display what we are capable of doing when we refuse to admit our real needs. Related to that Jesus said (v.50) that he was facing judgment himself.

#### **B. Salvation through bearing our judgment. (50)**

*"I have a baptism to be baptized with..."* Baptism means to immerse or fully submerge. Jesus uses this word to describe his immersion into his impending rejection, condemnation, and execution or what we often call, his passion. Jesus knew what was before him and therefore, his distress was great until it was accomplished. This was his baptism. This was his mission. This was his death to die. This was his all-consuming and unique burden to bear. No one else could die for our sins. No one else could be condemned in our place and it be sufficient to pay for our sins. This was his to be fully immersed into. Are you connecting the dots? Only God can save you from God. Only the death of Christ in your place can save you from God's righteous judgment against your sin. And beloved, it does! His death accomplished it. His death satisfied the wrath of God against our sin. Jesus went all in for you. He was fully immersed into his crucifixion. The payment of his life paid our debt in full.

That sounds good and it is good, but it is only good for you if you are willing to admit your debt, that is your sin. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to be one of those in the minority who is honest enough and humble enough to invite God to invade every closet and cubby of your soul and see it all so that he can clean it all. Beloved, please don't hide. Don't pretend he does not know your search history, your secret apps, accounts, or anything else about you.

Rather, invite God to conduct an audit of your heart. Invite God to show you your true condition before him. My biggest fear is that some of you are convenient Christians, but not convictional. You want a convenient Jesus, but genuine Christianity is not convenient. Jesus came to provide salvation through judgment. He preached a message of judgment so that people would repent and he himself was judged on the cross for all those who repented of their sin and believed on him. Jesus did the hardest thing for us because God determined that our salvation was worth it. Now, if you are a follower of Christ or considering becoming one you need to know ...

#### **2. What we are called to do is hard, but worth it. (51-53)**

Christ states that he is controversial. *“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?”* Wait, isn’t that what the angel said to the shepherds on the night Christ was born? *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace (but do not neglect the rest of the line) among those on whom his favor rests or with whom he is pleased.”* The peace that Jesus offers is not a universal peace simply because it is not accepted by everyone. Those who accept the terms of Jesus are at peace with God, but those who do not are at war with God. There is a division between those who are at peace with God and who are at war with God. The dividing line is Christ. He is divisive. He is the ultimate uniter of those who follow him, but that unity in Christ comes with disunity with this world, which in many cases means disunity within your own family.

Jeff knows the gospel. He knows that Jesus died on the cross in order to pay the penalty for Jeff’s sin. Jeff knows that the Bible teaches that his efforts at being a good, respectable, moral and kind of religious person do not count for anything. He knows that the Bible teaches that every person who stops trusting in themselves but trusts in Christ alone is forgiven, declared righteous, given eternal life and adopted into the family of God forever. Jeff knows these things, but so far, he has not been willing to commit to Christ. Why not? Jeff has a father who died not believing the gospel. If Jeff trusts in Christ alone, then he is saying that his father who did not trust in Christ died without hope. Jeff is not willing to do that. He would rather be separated from Christ than “separated” from his father.

Many of you know this in another way. You were once taught that because you were a practicing church attender who was sprinkled, confirmed, said the prayers, stood, kneeled, repeated the sayings, and lit the candles that you were doing all the right things. But it really didn’t make sense to you how lighting candles to saints made up for your sin. Eventually you discovered what the Bible was all about and it made sense to you. The lights came on. You came to trust in Christ alone and your life was changed from the inside out and you were so excited to share this with your family, thinking that they would want to hear this. For many of you; the opposite was true. When you shared your new found faith, you were viewed as the enemy. “Are you saying that our entire family is wrong and you are only the one, right? Are you saying that we are all going to hell? Who do you think you are?” On and on it went and on and on it has gone. You would think that people would want to know that they could be rescued from their sin. You would think that. But sadly, that is not the case.

Being reconciled to God means that you will be separated (not reconciled) to some (many) people. Following Christ can feel lonely, for now. It was lonely for Christ too. His own brothers did not believe him. His own family was divided because of him. You will never be called to walk a road of discipleship that he has not already blazed. Sorrow now, glory later. Affliction (with grace) now, perfection later.

2 Cor. 1.3-7

### 3. Whose side are you on?

Mark (not his real name) attended here and heard the gospel and professed faith in Christ. His dad didn't care if he attended this church, but his dad drew a line at baptism. If you get baptized there, he said, you will be disowned. Mark had a hard decision to make? Would he obey Christ and publicly identify himself as a follower of Jesus, or not? Would he live at peace with God, but enmity with his family? Was the grief now, worth the glory later?

Sara (not her real name) started dating a nice guy, who was not a follower of Christ. Sara professed faith in Christ but was tired of living alone and this guy gave her someone to talk to, someone to do things with and someone to look forward to. They were attracted to each other and he asked her to marry him. Could she, a follower of Christ, marry someone who was at war with God? Could she be united in an intimate relationship with someone who was fundamentally in rebellion to God? Would she pick having a family here but being separated from her forever family? Or was the sorrow now, worth the glory later?

Both Mark and Sara made their decisions and they made them based on whether or not Jesus was really worth it. What would you do if you were them? That depends on what you really believe about Jesus. Is Jesus worth a costly obedience?

Jesus said these things in order to clarify what it means to follow him. I do not want you under any illusions. Following Jesus is hard, but is worth it. He does not hide the fine print or talk fast at the end of the commercial in order to disguise the disclaimers. Here it is: Are you in or out?

Now, to those of you who are not in? You are not willing to be a follower of Christ. Ok, what is it that you are trusting in? If it is not Christ, what is it? Can you die on the cross for your sin and raise the dead? We all agree that we need help. We need to be rescued. Life is not a game, but is more like a war. And one day, you will be like the soldier in the landing crafts coming under intense fire. Who will save you, when you can't?

Jesus is the King of the upside-down Kingdom, the Judge who took your judgment so you could have life. He considered the purchase of your eternal salvation worth his intense but temporary sorrow. Will you consider the glory of Jesus worth a costly faith?