

Sharper Things

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Luke 12:49-53 ⁴⁹ "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! ⁵¹ "Do *you* suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. ⁵² "For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. ⁵³ "Father will be divided 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 her mother-in-law."

This is a knife. It is supposed to be sharp; if it isn't sharp, it can't do its job. This is God's Word. It, too, is meant to be sharp, but we often attempt to dull it down.

Jesus says in our text that He came to start a fire. He is speaking about His Word. Elsewhere, He calls it a sword. God's Word is meant to cut and burn—it is supposed to be sharp. It's not a Nerf sword, made for kids' play and safety.

It's an obsidian blade that will cut deeply before you even realize what it's doing.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Revelation 1:16

He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

God's Word is meant to cut and divide. It separates the penitent from the impenitent. It exposes our sin, cuts away our excuses, and reveals the heart so that we might recognize our need for a Savior, repent, and be saved.

We find the sharpness of God's Word to be impolite and uncomfortable. It's impolite to suggest that those who do not believe will face hell. It's uncomfortable to consider that many who lived without access to a Bible or church still face judgment.

These are sharp questions, ones we'd prefer to dull. But God's Word is sharp to expose our sins so that, recognizing what we are, we might turn to Jesus, receive forgiveness, and be saved.

Matthew 21:44

And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.

God's Word breaks us—but without it, we would be completely crushed.

In our Old Testament reading, the prophets were dulling down God's Word. Around 600 BC, there were false prophets—just as there are today—and they told the people, “God loves you. You are His people. God would never punish you.”

Jeremiah 8:11

For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.

“They have healed ... my people **slightly**.” To preach peace without confronting sin is like applying a soothing ointment and a bandage over a gangrenous wound. God's Word is a scalpel that cuts out what is rotten and gangrenous. Only then can it heal with the true peace that comes from knowing your sins are forgiven.

Luke 12:51

“Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.”

This sharp knife of God's Word will cause division—not because Jesus desires conflict or war, but because many will refuse to accept it.

In our text this morning, Jesus describes the reaction that will follow when the apostles go out with His message—the message of the cross and the resurrection. This preaching will not bring peace to nations or stop wars. It will ignite a fire. It will create division, but it will also bring healing and peace to individuals. This is symbolized on Pentecost, when flames of fire appeared over the apostles' heads—the fire of the Word kindled by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said He did not come to bring peace. He did come to bring peace to individuals but only by confronting sin not avoiding it.

Certainly, Jesus came to bring peace— but not “peace on earth” as He states in our text.

Jesus speaks about something different. He refers to the certain effect His Word has among people. His Word does bring peace to the hearts of those who are penitent—those who recognize their sins and look to Jesus for forgiveness.

But God's Word does not create an earthly peace where everyone stops fighting and lives in brotherly love. Jesus knew this would not be the outcome, because many reject the message of the cross, as Paul reminds us:

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

Jesus understands that true peace does not come from everyone getting along, but from confronting the truth of our sin and finding refuge in His death and resurrection. Peace can only come when God's Word cuts us free from the grip of sin and from worldly influences.

This truth about God's Word cutting us isn't meant to frighten us or push us away—it's an act of love. It's God's gentle yet firm way of drawing us closer to His mercy. When Jesus said He did not come to bring peace as the world gives, He meant the false peace that avoids confronting sin.

True peace is found in knowing we are forgiven, healed, and given new life through His death and resurrection.