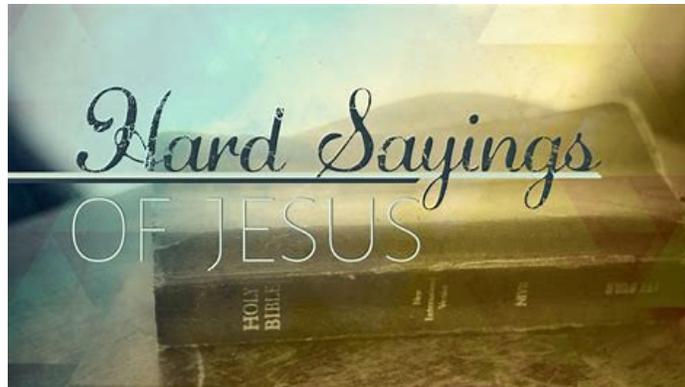


I Came Not To Bring Peace But Division

Luke 12:49-53

The Difficult Sayings Of Jesus #2

Weekend of May 4-5, 2019



We're in a series called "The Difficult Sayings of Jesus," and the big idea behind this series is that many people have a serious misconception about Jesus, that he was this tranquil, unflappable religious guru who just went around spreading peace, love and groovy vibes. The real Jesus was polarizing: you either loved him or hated him. The more attractive he grew to some, the more loathsome he grew to others.

While certain people thronged to him, others plotted his death. That's how you know you've encountered the real Jesus, by the way. You either love him or hate him. Most people today find Jesus boring, or sentimental...no one in the Bible ever found him boring or sentimental. That shows many people have never encountered the real thing.

These difficult statements Jesus made should help you understand which side of that line you are on. Do you love him or hate him? Let's look at several scriptures that really cause us to define this relationship.

"I came to cast fire on the earth and would that it was 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." Luke 12:49-53

Jesus is going to divide some families...some of you have experienced that. Why? His claims are so absolute you can't be ambivalent about him. Look at this similar statement...

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” Matthew 10:37-39

Here’s what we’ve learned...

- Jesus came not to bring peace, but division?
- I’ll end up separating people within a household?
- And unless you love me more than your own family you can’t be my disciple?

This is like a triple threat of difficult and hard statements. I want to do four things as we look at this text. First, let’s Deal with a widely-held myth...Second, expose a staggering claim...third, reveal an incredible motivation...and lastly, ask a few very practical questions.

A Widely-Held Myth: Christianity is More Divisive than Other Viewpoints:

The assumption is that other viewpoints are tolerant and inclusive, but Jesus’ message is intolerant and exclusive.

When Jesus came, he claimed to be the full and complete revelation the one true God. Is he or is he not who he says he is? All of our division comes from that judgment. When I am talking to a person who tells me that I am a narrow person...I ASK: is your problem with my interpretation of Jesus, or is your problem with Jesus himself? That’s a very important question. If the issue is with my interpretation, then let’s study it. Truthfully, most people don’t want anybody telling them thus says the Lord. They want no authority in their lives but their own authority.

So, see, it is a myth that Christianity is unusually exclusive. Jesus question is, “Am I Lord or not?” If he is, he has total authority; if not, his claims to authority are invalid.

**A Staggering Claim: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”
Matthew 10:37**

This statement is staggering for 2 reasons: First, Jesus puts himself right at the center of our faith. He doesn’t say, “Love and obey God, but love and obey me.”

Other great religious leaders in the world never said things that...Mohammad never said it. Buddha didn’t say it. They all said, “Love and obey God.” Other great Christian leaders deflected the attention off of them and onto God. John the Baptist, whom Jesus called “the greatest prophet ever to live,” said, “God’s name must increase, but I must decrease.

George Whitefield, one of the great leaders of America’s Great Awakening, said, “Let the name of Whitefield perish from the earth!”

Jesus, by contrast, always wanted to talk about himself! He didn’t tell people to “love and follow God,” but “love and follow me.” And told people that unless they loved him more than their own kids that they couldn’t follow him.

Here's what that means...Jesus is either the worst cult leader ever, or he was something different than every other religious leader: he's actually God. The object of faith.

This claim is staggering because Jesus is demanding to be the center of faith and affection...it is also staggering because he is talking about a commitment that trumps our most precious relationships; a commitment that can have no conditions.

Here's a question: Do you love Jesus more than your family? If you ever had to choose between him, and them, what would you choose? Are you teaching your kids to obey Jesus more than you? Where are you directing their loyalty and love? Is it first to you, or to him? Where are you directing their priorities? Look at your family schedule. Is it designed to center their lives and affections around him?

I don't want any of this to imply that coming to Jesus gives you some kind of brazen, unloving attitude toward your family. People who come to Jesus become better husbands and fathers and children because Jesus teaches us to lay down your lives for those people. But for many of us, our kids, our families, are idols we put ahead even of God. Your kids are good things that have become God things.

You're basically just using Jesus to get good family, which is the ultimate thing for you. Jesus will not be used as a means to anything else.

An Incredible Motivation: *"I came to cast fire on the earth and would that it was already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!"* **Luke 12:49-50** Whenever God sent fire to earth, it brought judgment. He says, I have a baptism to undergo first...his own baptism...of fire.

The problem is, if God's righteous wrath destroys all the wickedness, would any of us survive? All we...For all have sinned...So, he suffered God's wrath in our place.

Tim Keller: *"Jesus did not come to earth the first time to bring justice but rather to bear it. He came not with a sword in his hands but with nails through his hands. Christian teaching for centuries has been this: Jesus died on the cross in our place, taking the punishment our sins deserve, so that someday he can return to earth to end evil without destroying us all."*

You see, if you're sitting around thinking about what a huge sacrifice it is to follow Jesus, and it seems burdensome, you're probably not grasping the greatness of the treasure you have in Jesus...

You'll never give up more for him than he gave up for you. You'll never go farther for him than he went for you. You'll never suffer more for him than he did for you. Dwell on

that, and this passage won't seem like a burden. Let the truth of this scripture guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. From the apostle Paul to Timothy...

“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.” 2 Timothy 1:12

This passage leads us to this last point...

4 Practical Questions...

Have I “owned” Jesus in all my relationships?

What if you have family members that refuse to have relationship with you if you choose to follow Christ? How do you share your faith in your work environment? How far to political correctness go when it comes to my faith? How does my faith and integrity at work live side by side? With my friends, do I maintain my integrity to my faith with faced with their ridicule and criticism? Here's a second question...

Am I obeying him with what's in front of me right now?

It's easy to talk about “total sacrifice.” Here's what you need to know about sacrifices...they have their throats slit. Ask yourself this hard question...Am I obeying right now the commandments that God has clearly stated for me to obey? Here is an issue where you can check your obedience...

The majority of Christian young people are living together. Christian Mingle: singles aged 18 to 59 were asked, “Would you have sex before marriage?” 63% said yes. What business do you have sitting through a sermon about dying for Jesus... and then singing a song about how worthy he is, when you won't even obey him in a very clear thing he has said? Try this on for size...

I know people who are very sincere in following Jesus, yet they won't rearrange their life to come to church. For you, the immediate decision in following Jesus means simply prioritizing the things of God. For you, following Jesus does not mean being burned at the stake yet, but it does mean re-arranging your work schedule. That's the decision for you. Here's a third question...

Do I have any conditions for following Jesus?

What do I insist he provide for me to follow him? I know many who have quit following because...of some pain or disappointment: I didn't get this job, or maybe this bad thing happened. That was a condition that just revealed Christ wasn't “all” to you, but a means to an end. Look at this last question...

Where I am causing division, or am I doing it like him?

A lot of Christians have no problem with this message. They are just divisive jerks. Look at Jesus' response to those who hated him...

“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” 1 Peter 2:23

Here are three ways that Christians are unlike Christ and causing division...When they force it: Jesus never did that. He would speak, warn, pray. But not force. The topic doesn't have to come up at every dinner conversation.

When we defend ourselves in anger: Jesus didn't do that. He took our insults. When I'm angry, that shows me it is personal. Here's the last one...

Judging the person: We'll talk about this more next week but judging someone is NOT telling them the truth about what Jesus says. It is when you dismiss in condemnation the person you disagree with. Jesus was very clear about our sin, but then brought us close.

How will this hard saying cause you to pursue Christ more fully?

Potential Life Group Questions

1. Read Luke 12:49-53. Why does Jesus say He came to earth? How does this compare with the common view of why Jesus came? See v. 51.
2. Why does Jesus wish for the fire to be kindled quickly? What does fire represent? See Is. 66:15; Joel 2:30; Amos 1:7; Mal. 3:2.
3. Why does Jesus cause division? Can you think of any situation in which this has proven to be true?