

05212023 Following Jesus is serious business.... It has been pointed out that we only divide over people and things we take seriously, issues that we care about -- and it is true. There is good reason they say do not bring up religion or politics at family gatherings... someone and sometimes everyone takes those issues real serious.... On the other hand If we don't take an issue or certain people seriously...we tend toward a whatever attitude...

For instance, "There would be no debate over, abortion, the environment, religion, politics,...if no one took it seriously. And there would be no division over Jesus if no one took Him seriously.

Had not the crowds, the prostitutes, the sinners, the demon-possessed, and the diseased taken Jesus seriously: there would have been no division with the religious leaders of the day. The high priest, Sanhedrin, and Romans would have ignored Jesus."

Very simply, the study today is about taking Jesus seriously. And in this passage of scripture the Lord is acknowledging that any time and any place where people take the Jesus seriously, there probably will be division of one type or another often with family.

Following Jesus can be weird...many people look at that as an affliction, a weakness or crutch rather than a strength or personal relationship. But for those of us who love him it is more than an affiliation it is a lifestyle...and that can even freak people out more...

listen...

A story told by Andrew Greeley, the best-selling novelist who also is a Roman Catholic priest writes: at the end of a summer vacation, a young man called his mother and father and brothers and sisters together after a

day on the beach. There was something important he wanted to tell them.

He was going into his third year at Ohio State. His grades were wonderful, he was charming, and popular, and successful. Everyone expected he would do important things in life. His father was a medical doctor and from the day this eldest son was born, he assumed that the boy would follow him into the profession. There had never been any discussion of the matter. No discussion was necessary. It was taken for granted.

So what was the important subject the young man wanted to talk about? He had the crazy idea he wanted to be a minister. In fact, he told his family he would be starting his studies at seminary in September! . . . There was a moment of dead silence. . . . Then the father said that no son of his was going to become a minister. He had no respect for ministers. If his son wanted to be a minister, then he would no longer be his son. Then the father stormed out of the room and left everyone in silence. . . . "You have ruined our family," his mother told him. . . . **You would have thought this young man said he wanted to be a murderer.**

- I'm telling you, if you've got Jesus Christ and are committed to him, you're going to make other people a little uncomfortable. And that might even include members of your own family.
- **And It will also cause discomfort within ourselves following Jesus is not for the faint of heart**
- A leaving of something...especially when power, position, prestige, expectations are included, ... for the gaining of something better...always requires serious consideration...and a choice

- **The bottom line is we each have a choice to make. We must decide for ourselves whether we will take the words of Jesus Christ seriously, and give our lives to him without reserve. He asks us for nothing less. . . .**

Which takes us to chapter 12 of Luke today...Jesus spends much of the 12th chapter of Luke's Gospel reassuring and encouraging his disciples as they and Jesus face greater and greater hostility from the religious leaders..

In fact, in verse 4 of the 12th chapter of Luke, Jesus says;

NLT Luke 12:4 "Dear friends, don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. **and then in verse 22,**

- **Jesus says;** " ³² "So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.
- **But we see that this same chapter ends on a seemingly far less positive note.** Rather than continue to encourage and reassure his disciples, Jesus says that following him will cause division.
- **It is not the division we can cause by our own actions and then when confronted we call it persecution because we were just following Jesus...**For example...the married guy who left his wife, and two children to follow Jesus full time....
- **it is separation caused by you following Jesus in your own personal life, and the division happens because because people especially some family members make choices that seem so different than they would choose...**
- **then Jesus uses himself as the example..Jesus tells them that he came to bring fire to the earth...**and this fire will separate people...

NLT LK 12: 49 "I have come to set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! ⁵⁰ I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished.

- **What is the 'fire' that Jesus has come to set upon the earth? He says He wishes it were already burning. I believe He was speaking of the Holy Spirit, who was to come at Pentecost after the crucifixion. When the Holy Spirit did come, He appeared as fire. (Acts 2:3) **The fire will, create a burning enthusiasm among some and fierce antagonism among others, and the sooner started, the better.****
- **The cross...started the fire...this is continually distressing to him...a great burden he carries...as he states**

NLT Luke 12:50 ⁵⁰ I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished.

The cross His crucifixion, and death is the kindling or starting of the fire.. ...the resurrection and Pentecost are the flames igniting the world.....

- **A number of times he shares this burden ... one of them John 12:27**

NLT JN 12:27 "Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But this is the very reason I came!

- **He shudders but He does not shrink from it.**
- **That is significant for us...the cross must proceed the resurrection and the Holy Spirit of fire coming...**
- **And his family had problems with that...**

There are times when separation must take precedent over relational loyalty...

when he was twelve...at the Passover celebration in Jerusalem...Jesus separated from family for three days..

*LK 2:49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my **Father's house**?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

still later... *NLT MK 3:20* One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again. Soon he and his disciples couldn't even find time to eat. ²¹ When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. "He's out of his mind," they said.

A little while later they found him... *NLT MK 3:31* Then Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him. They stood outside and sent word for him to come out and talk with them. ³² There was a crowd sitting around Jesus, and someone said, "Your mother and your brothers^[ff] are outside asking for you." ³³ Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" ³⁴ Then he looked at those around him and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. ³⁵ Anyone who does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Another time his brothers..... *JN 7:1* After this, Jesus traveled around Galilee. He wanted to stay out of Judea, where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. ² But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, ³ and Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! ⁴ You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!" ⁵ For even his brothers didn't believe in him.

- **His brothers were willing to place their brother in harm's way ...because they thought it might bring him publicity...they did not believe in him...but enjoyed the miracle magic show...**
- **And misunderstood his motives...they thought he wanted to be a popular public figure...a Jewish Celebrity**
- **They absolutely misunderstood Jesus...and some of your family might too**

Luke 12:51 Do you think I came to bring peace **on earth**? No, I tell you, but division.

- **He insists that he will not bring peace. Make everything nice...Instead, He will bring division among people between those for him and those not..and we must expect it**
- **And to his disciples he says this division effect your families also**

Luke 12: ⁵² From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against—or two in favor and three against. ⁵³ ‘Father will be divided against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; and mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.’”

The picture is of a family of five: father, mother, daughter, son, and son's wife. The mother and the mother-in-law are the same person. The son's wife has come to live with the family.

- He is not saying on which side the two or the three are. The emphasis is on the word "**divided against.**"
- **There is a difficulty that will arise when one chooses loyalty to Jesus... this hostility will be because they do not regard Jesus...who he is and what he represents the same as you...**

And this trouble will sometimes happen with those closest to us...sadly enough...the ones who ought to be for our new lives often give us the most trouble...

There are times when separation must take precedent over relational loyalty...

There is the true story of a girl named **Perpetua**, was a 22-year-old noblewoman who lived in Carthage, North Africa. She was recently married and the mother to a nursing infant. Perpetua followed in her mother's footsteps and became a Christian in AD 203, despite major

discouragement from her pagan father. When he begged her to abandon Christianity, she asked him if he could call a water jug by any other name than what it was. When he said no, she told him, “Well, so too I cannot be called anything other than what I am, a Christian”. Her family tried desperately to dissuade her from Christianity but she persisted. In desperation, her own father brought legal charges against her in the hope that the trial would shock her back into her senses, even pleading with her eloquently during the trial, but she continued to profess Christianity and was convicted. The prison was hot and crowded, subjecting the believers to intense suffering, the worst of which was Perpetua being separated from her baby. Two deacons in Perpetua’s church were eventually able to pay the guards to place the prisoners in a better cell. The prisoners’ faith, strength, and courage then convinced the warden to allow family to visit, and Perpetua could finally feed her child again. The testimony of of Perpetua would eventually lead the warden to faith in Christ as well.

The execution of the prisoners was scheduled to take place during the military games celebrating the birthday of Emperor Septimius Severus. The prison was hot and crowded, subjecting the believers to intense suffering, the worst of which was Perpetua being separated from her baby. Two deacons in Perpetua’s church were eventually able to pay the guards to place the prisoners in a better cell. The prisoners’ faith, strength, and courage then convinced the warden to allow family to visit, and Perpetua could finally feed her child again. The testimony of these Christians would eventually lead the warden to faith in Christ as well. Finally, she was executed—by being devoured by wild animals. Perpetua’s last recorded words before were, “**You must all stand fast in the faith and love one another, and do not be weakened by what we have gone through**”

Her family grieved her refusal to relent. Incidentally, Perpetua did not die in vain. Through her trial, imprisonment and death, the Roman public came to see that Christianity was not some horrible threat, and Perpetua's death did much to end the practice of throwing Christians to the lions.

She loved her family but did not love them more than Jesus... she would not please them rather than God and if following Jesus causes suffering...than it cause suffering

- Following Jesus causes divisions, not because of God or because of the Word, but because of unbelief...

The solution.... Don't be a people pleaser when it comes to God ..don't give up...love your family who don't know Jesus like you do... in time you will greatly influence them... stay on fire

James and Jude two of Jesus brothers eventually came around both writing books of the New Testament...

Perpetua influenced a nation...the soon to be doctor became a doctor of souls...who knows what ripple effect following Jesus will cause in this world...

NiV JOS 24:15.... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

end

John 15:20 Remember the **words** I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ **They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me**

- They do not understand who he is nor where he is from...

Some acknowledge the Gospel as true, others not. The Gospel is a "scandal," a foolish thing, to the unbeliever it was to Jesus brothers...it might be to ours also....

- And you will also struggle with allegiance to yourself..or allegiance to God...
- Just expect it...so the man or woman worthy of following Jesus will consider this part of the cost...it divides because it is serious business...
- Jesus experienced it his followers will experience it...God is the one who deserves and demands our highest allegiance...

Note the parallel thoughts spoken by Jesus in Matthew 10:35-36.

MT 10:36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. ^{MT} 10:37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Any family that is divided by an issue will suffer some sort of relational agony, and the agony is destructive unless it is caused by someone choosing a better way. The virtue of suffering is determined by the merits of the cause of the suffering.

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better way. The virtue of suffering is determined by the merits of the cause of the suffering.

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MK 10:38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

- **This is one of the fairly numerous statements in which Jesus predicts His Passion. Whenever He thought of it, sorrow assailed Him. . . .**

Another story...There was a young man who came to see Jesus, This rich young man knew the religious law and observed it faithfully, but he couldn't bring himself to take Jesus seriously when the Master told him to sell everything he owned and follow him.

MK 10:17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

MK 10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.' "

MK 10:20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

MK 10:21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

MK 10:22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

- He turned and walked away sadly. He made his choice. Interestingly Jesus did not chase him...to get him back
- In his heart of hearts he did believe Jesus was good until Jesus asked him to sell his possessions then give away the proceeds...that was definitely not good...even if it included a promise of far greater treasure to be received later...

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As Jesus changes direction and states that his ministry will also cause separation.

LK 12: 49 "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 what constraint I am under until it is completed!

- Don't think I came to smooth things over and make everything nice? Not so. I've come to bring fire from heaven... that he came to bring fire to the earth...
- He was talking about bringing judgment--not the judgment of others but rather His own judgment.
- It is a judgment that the Messiah will bear for others, not one He will inflict on others. "I've come to start a fire on this earth -- how I wish it were blazing right now! I've come to change everything, turn everything right-side up -- how I long for it to be finished!

- **The fire will, create a burning enthusiasm among some and introduce the Holy Spirit to them..and and fire will create fierce antagonism among others, and the sooner kindled, the better.**

Remember...There is a peace promised beyond the challenge of following Jesus; a united family beyond any division that faith may have caused or bring.

Finally words of encouragement...

LK 18:28 Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" LK 18:29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life

- **Our time on this earth is limited and therefore precious. It would be a shame to allow time to pass without seriously considering information of potential importance to eternal destiny, particularly if that information is verifiable yet different from what we currently believe.**
- **The answer repent...and produce actions in accordance to that...**
- **May the roots of our mind and heart be soft to embrace the nourishment...brought by the weather and season we are in...**

So the solution...

LK 12: 36 like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.

- **Run around and delay opening the door for him...because were trying to straighten up the mess we made....catch up on the work we should have done...get our attitude right...**
- **end**

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