

He Came to Cast Fire on the Earth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 January 2025

Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 12.

In Luke, chapter 12, Jesus has been focusing or refocusing, continually bringing back this theme of living in light of eternity, looking at the future, looking at what comes after this life, what difference our life makes today, how it impacts the future.

And in our present passage in Luke 12, we'll be looking at verses 49 through chapter 13, verse 9. Again, the theme is still eternity, but here Jesus' words, become a very strong, very difficult words and words that are a rebuke or a wake-up call.

It depends on how, whether you have ears to hear it or not. So, I'm walking into these verses a little bit with trepidation.

These are difficult words. Okay. So, as we do, we want to read the text and we'll ask the Lord to help us have light with it and then we'll dig into it.

[1 : 38] So, if you're able, please stand as I read from Luke, chapter 12, the last section of chapter 12 through the first section of chapter 13. Chapter 12, verse 48.

Well, I'm going to start with the end of verse 48. Where he says, Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required.

And from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand it the more. For I came to cast fire on the earth.

And would that it were 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. No. I tell you, but rather division. For from now on, in one house, there will be five divided.

[2 : 47] 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. Father against mother-in-law. He also said to the crowds, When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, Oh, a shower's coming.

And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, There will be scorching heat. And it happens. You hypocrites. You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky. But why do you not know how to interpret the present time? And why do you not judge from yourselves what is right?

As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, Make an effort to settle with him on the way. Lest he drag you to the judge and the judge hand you to the officer.

[3 : 57] And the officer puts you in prison. I say to you, you will never get out Until you have paid the very last penny.

Literally 16th of a penny. There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans Whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And he answered them, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans Because they suffered in this way?

No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those 18 on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them.

Do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

[5 : 00] And he told this parable. A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. And he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

And he said to the vine dresser, Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree. And I find none. Then cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?

And he answered him, Sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and put on manure. Then, if it should bear fruit next year, well and good.

But if not, you can cut it down. So it reads, Let us ask the Lord to help us in this. Father, give us light to see what Jesus is saying.

Help us to understand it in the context of his coming. What is fire? What is baptism? What are these hard words? How are we to hear them?

[6 : 06] And Father, we pray that you give us hearts to be receptive. Let us not be like those hypocrites who can discern everything else in the world but cannot discern how you are working.

Give us eyes to see. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Okay, let's just skip this section and get to something nicer, shall we?

In today's culture, terms like sin, judgment, repentance are less familiar ideas, to say the least. If you talk about a judgment day and hell, you will be labeled as judgmental and crossing the line. That's our culture.

And I will tell you, it wasn't much different in the first century. If people consider Jesus at all in our culture, they want to think of him on their own terms.

[7 : 19] The loving Jesus, the gentle, compassionate, tolerant Jesus, the one who loved sinners and ate with them. That is Jesus, absolutely. But that's not all of Jesus.

What do we do with a Jesus who talks about casting fire on the earth? What do we do with a Jesus that talks about, that interprets horrible tragedies as a basis for repenting?

Wow. Seems harsh, doesn't it? But again, this isn't all of Jesus, but it is part of Jesus, and we need to hear it. It is something he said.

It is something he talked about. And as we've seen in this whole chapter of Luke 12, it's been building. It's been building. It keeps causing people to look forward.

Now, remember now, this is toward the end of his ministry. Even though we're only 12 chapters into Luke, we're only months away from his cross. So he's gotten past the popular.

[8 : 27] There's still crowds, but he's really not trying to milk the crowds. He's separating people. He's starting to use hard words to separate who's really a follower, who's not.

So he talks about, verse 49, I came. Why did I come? I came to cast fire on the earth. That's not the only purpose statement Jesus had. Let's remember that. In Luke, we go back to the very beginning of his ministry.

Remember after he was baptized by John. Remember he went into the synagogue at Nazareth. He took out the scroll of Isaiah, and he read these words. I'm looking at Luke 4, 18.

He read these words from Isaiah. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

[9 : 33] He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant. Every eye was on him, and he said to them, Today the scripture has been fulfilled. I'm the one anointed by the Spirit.

Now that's Jesus, right? That's the Jesus we know and love. He's come to set free the captives, to proclaim the good news. Yes, that's his purpose. Well, we go on. Remember, he was eating with tax gatherers.

He had called Matthew, the tax collector, to follow him, and the Pharisees criticized him. So over in Luke chapter 5, Jesus answered these Pharisees. He said, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I have not come to call the righteous.

Why has he come? To call sinners, to repentance. That's why he's come. And then we see in chapter 9, now everything changes in chapter 9 of Luke, the transition point.

This is where Jesus first revealed his grand purpose. He said in verse 22, Luke 9, 22, this is right after he has revealed himself as the Messiah to the 12.

[10 : 47] He said to them, The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

That's the first time he revealed that. That he has come to suffer, to be killed, and to rise again on the third day.

He will say that several times to them. And then toward the end of chapter 9, verse 51, Luke tells us, When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. He set his face to go to Jerusalem. So notice from the end of chapter 9 of Luke, he's on his way to Jerusalem. It's going to take some months, but he's on, as far as Luke's perspective as he's writing, this is the weight of his gospel is going to be about that last 9, 10 months of traveling to Jerusalem, making, circling around, preaching, talking, before his triumphal entry. Okay? This is where Luke is taking us. And these 10 chapters from the end of Luke 9 to Luke 19 are fairly unique to the rest of the gospels. [12:03] Okay? Only Luke includes these. We have all these parables that he tells us. We have all these situations that are unique to Luke. Okay? Mark kind of goes quick. Matthew focuses on the big messages.

John gives us a whole different perspective, but this is Luke. Luke wants to talk about this journey and the words of Jesus as he, on one hand, rebukes the crowds and trains his 12 as he's doing this both.

So here we have more training and rebuke as well. So when we talk about the purpose of his coming, he says, I came, right, to set the captives free. I came to call sinners to repentance. I came to be rejected, to be killed and to be raised on the third day. That's why I came. Now he says in verse 49, this is where it's confusing. I came to cast fire on the earth. Okay, how does that fit? Is that why he came? Is that the very purpose? The purpose, as we know, is the gospel.

[13:04] Purpose is preaching the good news. Purpose is to die for us. So what does he mean by this? I think what he means is the effect. The effect of what he's doing will cast fire on the earth.

The effect of his words will divide people. The effect of his words will bring judgment on those who reject his words.

Okay, as he said in John, I did not come to condemn. I did not come to condemn. I did not come to condemn. But those who don't believe me are condemned. The effect.

Okay, so I think that's what he's talking about. I came to cast fire. The effect of his words, the effect of people's response to him will bring fire. Okay, that's what I think we're talking about.

So what do we got here in this passage? What kind of impact does Jesus' coming make in our lives? Well, the impact.

[14:09] What is the effect? Well, I think what Luke shows us, what Jesus shows us are two surprising effects. One, in verse 49, as he says, he came to cast fire.

And the result of that fire is division. Did not come to bring peace on earth, but to bring division. It's not what he purposed.

It was the effect. Okay? And then secondly, in verse 54 following, he's going to talk about judgment. He came to bring judgment. The effect of judgment. There's an impact of the fire of judgment. It will divide people, and not just divide people here, but it will divide people later. Okay, so let's look at this.

First impact, first impact, the effect of Jesus' coming. Jesus' coming results in division, not peace on earth. It results in division, not peace on earth.

[15:12] We see this in his mission. He says, I came to cast fire. What do we mean by fire? Well, in the Bible, fire is a lot of things, isn't it?

We see, we just, I think, sang about the pillar of fire. Right? God was a pillar of fire, a pillar, you know, it's his glory, the burning bush.

Right? Fire has a purifying effect. It talks about the presence of God. It's a resting effect. Back when he was baptized, remember what John the Baptist said.

John the Baptist said, I baptize you with water for repentance. The one coming after me will baptize you with what? Fire. The Holy Spirit and fire.

He will baptize you with Holy, so in other words, he will immerse you in the Holy Spirit, and he will immerse you with fire. And then he talked about, he has a winnowing fork in his hand.

[16:13] Right? It's expressed this image of fire as this, he will winnow, he will throw, remember how they separate the wheat from the chaff. They throw it up in the air and the chaff blows away and the wheat falls down and he will fork, he will separate the wheat from the chaff.

And the chaff, what's he gonna do with the chaff? Throw it in the fire. Fire. See, so fire's about separation. Fire's about separation.

Here, I mean, fire, like I said, fire has a lot of different pictures, but here, it seems to have this thing. And then what's fascinating is what he says. I came to cast fire on the earth and then this statement that as I read through different translations, as I looked at the Greek and I read the scholars, it's all kind, it's a hard translation.

Our translation has would that it were already kindled. Literally what he said was what I wish if it had been already kindled.

I don't think that, does that help? I don't, it's really hard words. I don't know, does he mean I hope it's over? I wish it were already over.

[17 : 35] Is that what he's saying? I wish, what I want, what I want is if it had already been kindled. I don't. Another time that he asked for the cup to be passed.

Yeah, is that, well, and then here's the next statement, right? So this, this parallel statement in verse 50 about a baptism. So he says, fire and now baptism.

A baptism to be kindled. A fire to be cast and a baptism to be kindled. And again, he raises a question or he makes a personal statement in reference to it.

So in terms of fire, what I wish is it already be done. And then, and now a baptism be baptized with, oh, how great is my distress until it is accomplished.

Now that, I think the baptism one is a little easier. But isn't it interesting the various thing that John the Baptist said about him, you know, baptize, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit with fire.

[18 : 38] Now Jesus talked about fire and baptism. But baptism, so what does baptism mean? Okay, I don't care if you're a sprinkler or a dunker or what's the word?

And by the way, when we read baptism or baptism, we're reading the Greek word. Okay, it's not an English, that's not a translation, that's a Greek word.

Okay, because when they were translating it into English, they were sprinkling and not dunking so they didn't want to say that the word meant immerse. Just interesting side note.

It means to dip or immerse. It can mean other things but primarily the picture is immersion. Right?

So when he talks about a baptism to be baptized with, he's talking about he's going to be immersed in something.

He's going to be flooded. It's like the picture Jonah had in Jonah 2, memories in the belly of the great fish. And he talked about how he's been cast into the deep and the flood is surrounding him and the waves are pouring over him.

[19 : 43] That's baptism in a negative way. sense. He has a baptism to be baptized with. I think Dan, like you said, the cup, right? He also told his disciples, I got a cup that I have to drink.

He's talking about the crucifixion. Absolutely. I think that's what he's talking about is death. You think he's talking about well, and more than that because he's going to be immersed.

He's already starting to experience it, the rejection. He's already experiencing the mocking and the rebuke and the testing and he will be ultimately rejected and killed, right?

And he says he's distressed. How great is my distress? He's literally, he's being held fast by this whole idea.

Remember, Luke told us he's already set his face toward Jerusalem. He knows this is what he's going to do. He knows he's going to be rejected.

[20 : 46] He knows he's going to be killed, right? He knows he's going to suffer. So he's already, that's in his mind. He's absorbed with it. He's distressed by it.

Remember in Gethsemane, right? He was distressed in Gethsemane so much that he's sweating, right? So he's already experiencing that. So church tradition calls that his passion.

There's a movie called The Passion, right? But The Passion started way before, you know, he got to Jerusalem. Okay, he's already experiencing it. He's already knowing, absorbing it, thinking about it.

J.C. Rowe, one of my favorite devotional writers of about 150 years ago. The good writers are 150 years ago. And one of the later Puritan guys, not Puritanical, Puritan in a good sense, deep thinkers.

He said this about this passage. He said, we learn one thing from these verses, how thoroughly the heart of Christ was set on finishing the work which he came into the world to do.

[21 : 53] He says, I have a baptism to undergo, a baptism of suffering, of wounds, of agony, of blood, and of death. Yet none of these things moved him.

He says, how distressed I am until it is accomplished. The prospect of coming trouble did not deter him for a moment. He was ready and willing to endure all things in order to provide eternal redemption for his people.

Zeal for the cause he had taken in hand was like a burning fire within him to advance his father's glory, to open the door of life to a lost world, to provide a fountain for all sin and impurity by the sacrifice of himself.

These things were continually in the uppermost parts of his mind. He was distressed in spirit until this mighty work was finished.

Forever let us bear in mind that all Christ's sufferings on our behalf were endured willingly, voluntarily, and of his own free will.

[23 : 11] What a Savior. I love the way J.C. Ryle writes. How great is my stress until it is accomplished, until it is fulfilled.

Where's those words? Where do we hear those words again? It is finished, it is fulfilled. Right? On the cross, right? It is finished. Same word. It is fulfilled. It is accomplished.

It is finished. Tetelestai. Right? Tetelestai. It has been accomplished.

He clarifies an expectation. So what's the result? What does he mean this baptism and this fire?

Verse 51. He's going to clarify expectations. Remember, these are Jewish men in the first century. They are expecting a Messiah to come. They're expecting a new David to come, a better David, right? They're expecting a throne. They're expecting a kingdom on earth.

[24 : 10] Right? He says to them, verse 51, I know what you think, right? You think that I have come to give peace on the earth. No, I tell you, rather division.

The expectation is peace on earth, the kingdom on earth, set up the throne and reign on earth. But Jesus clarifies, no, not peace on earth.

Not that kind of peace. I have not come to give external, superficial peace. Earthly peace. And so, the impact of his coming is division.

It's going to divide people because he's not the Messiah they expected, that they had thought. So, what's the divisions looks like?

Verse 52 and 53, from now on, it's going to happen in one, just in one house. One house will be divided three against two, two against three. It'll be father against son and son against father, mother against daughter, daughter against mother.

[25 : 10] And even mother-in-law against daughter-in-law. Because remember, in a house, you got father and mother, you got a son, the son goes and gets a bride, right, and he brings the bride back to his house.

He builds on a room and they live there in the father's house. So, you have a daughter-in-law, you don't have a son-in-law because the son-in-law would be in another house. With me? That's why there's five in the house that he gives example of.

But note the impact is in the most intimate of relationships, father and son, mother and daughter.

Daughter-in-law, now that extended family. Daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

And it goes both ways. It's not just, it's not just father against son. It's also son against father. It's not just mother against daughter. It's daughter against mother. And same with in-law. It goes both ways.

It's a strong division. See? And that's just in one house. That's the impact of Jesus' ministry. People will be divided over him.

[26 : 17] His words create division. Because you either accept what he says or you don't. You retranslate it. You change it different. To follow Jesus, to fully trust the words that he says to practice his way will divide families.

Have you experienced that in your own family? In your extended family? We've experienced that strongly in our extended family. It's tragic.

It's sad. How can you believe that? Well, because it says so. Oh, you're misinterpreting.

Because I take the words clearly. And because I don't remove words and put them in that, you know. But that's what happens. And we know that. And it hurts.

And it's hard. We want peace on earth. But as Jesus said, he didn't come to bring peace on earth. He did come to bring peace. Let's not get that wrong.

[27 : 25] What did the angel say when he was born? Right? Glory to God in the highest. And on earth? Peace. Not peace on earth, but on earth, peace with men whom he's pleased with.

A different kind of peace. This is not in conflict. Let's... What did those angels say? What do our Christmas cards say? Well, yeah, our Christmas cards say one thing because they're translating it different.

Not what he said. Or not what they sang. Excuse me. So, what kind of peace? Let's clarify that, okay? We need some good news, don't we? If Christ did not bring earthly peace, what kind of peace did he bring?

Remember Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2, Paul is talking to people who were not Jewish, who were not, you know, they were outsiders like most of us.

He says, remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[28 : 31] Okay, what a great... You know, that's us. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Why? For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

See, what prevented peace? It was a dividing wall of hostility. By abolishing, this is what Jesus did in his death. He abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing... There he goes again. Killing the hostility. In order to create peace, he had to eliminate the hostility.

And what was the hostility? The hostility was the law. The law's not bad, but the law's hostile because the law demands your death.

[29 : 42] Because you've broken it. Do you know that? About the law? The law is holy and righteous and good. I'm not disparaging the law.

The law is pure and good. The problem is not the law. The problem is what? Us. And the law, being holy and righteous and good, says to you, says to me, thou art worthy of death.

Right? That's what it says to every one of us. It exposes our... So, Jesus, by his death, canceled that law, right?

He didn't throw it out, but he canceled its threat to us. He canceled its hostility against us because he both died in our place to pay the debt for our failure to keep the law.

And then he gave us his righteousness so that we're not just forgiven and now it's up to us. We're forgiven and now we're pure. Not because of anything we did.

[30 : 53] So, he came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near. For through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father. That's what peace did. Because of our peace, we were far away from God.

We could not approach a holy God. And now because Christ has paid our penalty and has purified us and reconciled us now, now we have access. As we just sang in Wesley's song, right?

Bold I approach the eternal throne. Why? Because that light that came in the dungeon, right? And my chains fell off. The light came and changed me.

And now I can bold. Now there's no condemnation. Now I can bold it. That's why we love that song. I love that song. And not only do we have access in one spirit to the Father, but now we are no longer strangers and aliens and we're no longer outsiders, but now we're fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

See the difference? It's not just me and Jesus. Now I got a whole new family. Now I got a whole new family who have been through the same stuff. So Jesus did not come to bring peace on the earth, but he came to make peace through the cross with the Father.

[32 : 15] Now he brings us into a new family. We're in families on earth that are divided because of Christ, but now we've been brought into a new family and members of a new household. So that's one impact of his coming.

His coming results in division, not peace on earth. Secondly, in verse 54, he confronts the hypocrisy of those who don't see him.

So the second impact is this. His coming results in judgment. It results in judgment of those unwilling to repent.

It's the same thing Jesus said in John chapter 3. Remember, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

That's the good news. He did not come to condemn the world. He did not come to condemn the world, but to bring salvation to the world.

[33 : 18] But those who, and those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who don't believe in him are condemned already. See, it's the result. He did not come to condemn, but the result of rejection of Jesus is condemnation.

Later, Jesus, you know, the light has come into the world, right? And what happens when light comes into the darkness? We scurry out and, you know, we hide.

We don't want to be exposed, right? Men love darkness rather than light. Why? Because their deeds are evil. But those who come to the light, those who say, okay, I'm coming to the light and the light exposes all my bad, but it also cleanses me, doesn't it?

That's my only hope of cleansing is to come into his holy light. Because it's scary because I want to hide, but coming into the light shows who I really am.

And then I experience the grace of God. Not shame, not condemnation. By coming into his light, he can cleanse me.

[34 : 24] It's the most unnatural thing to do, but that's the way of salvation. It's God's way, not our way. So, here's those that want to stay in the dark. So, verse 54, he exposes their hypocrisy.

Watch. Verse 54, he says, he said to the crowds, now he's been talking to the disciples, now he's going to, he's got these crowds there, now he's going to say to the crowds, right, when you see a cloud rising in the west, you say it once, oh, a shower's coming.

So, in Israel, from the west is the Mediterranean, the sea, and that's where the cold air comes from. So, when the wind comes from the west, it's going to cool off.

That's just part of being, living in Palestine. And then, he said, and so it is, right? We called it.

There's things we can call in Colorado, right, that are weather things.

You know, it's nice, but in three hours, it'll change. Right? We say, you know, we say, we look at weather forecasts, we go, eh, maybe. Maybe.

[35 : 25] But it could change. How do you forecast more than a day or two? I don't know. They forecast the week, and I'm like, how in the world would they know? Because the wind will shift, and the mountains will get in the way or the mountains will drop.

Who knows? So, Palestine, a little easier. They don't have big mountains like we do here. And then he says, and when you see the south wind blowing, okay, south wind.

So, Palestine, the south would be from the Sahara Desert. So, that's the heat wave coming from the south. Right? South creates the heat, and it can get so scorching hot in Israel from those heat waves that it will wilt plants.

So, he says, yeah, you know how to do that. Verse 56, here's the point, you hypocrites. You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky.

You can call the weather. You can see the signs. You pay attention to the changing weather patterns. You see the signs. You see the indicators.

[36 : 25] Right? You watch. You see the wind, or you feel that, you know, you watch, you can see it. But, the more important signs of God's working, you don't see.

How is that? He calls them on it. Why do you not know how to interpret the present time? Literally, the present kairos, not chronos, but the kairos.

Kairos is the word. So, in Greek, you have two words for time. Chronos, like chronology, like you watch time, like you calendar time, you know, progressive time. Then you have kairos time, which can mean season.

It can mean short, it can mean long. I mean, seasons of fruitfulness, seasons of pruning. We're in seasons of pruning, aren't we? This is church. I'm praying for that, as Jesus said, I prune you so that you might bear him over it.

Praying for that, we're waiting for that, right? So, he says, you can't see this time, this present time, this season.

[37 : 30] Can't you see what's happening? Multitudes are seeing something, they're seeing miracles, they're seeing changed lives, they're seeing, hearing these words of Jesus, like Peter says, we don't get it all, but we know it's you.

We know you're the one. So, how do they miss that? Well, they're hypocritical, they're pretending they're okay and they know they're not.

They're resistant in recognition. Verse 57, another question, why do you not judge from yourself what is right? Why do you not judge the right thing, literally, again, another hard translation here, but away from yourself, so what does that mean?

Why do you not make a judgment away from yourself? In other words, not interjecting yourself. You don't make an accurate judgment when you're subjective, in other words.

They're not being objective. They're not making a judgment away from themselves. Right? They're looking at them, they're seeing it through their eyes. That's like our culture. We want to see Jesus this way.

[38 : 45] And Jesus is saying, why are you making a judgment away, not away from yourself? Does that make sense? It's kind of weird language. Obviously, these religious rulers and the people of the day are making judgments about Jesus based on their prior conceived ideas.

and we all, that's just absolutely natural. We all do that. We grow up a certain way, we see things a certain way. Right? And maybe we learn later in life, well, I didn't quite have it right.

Oh, my parents did know some things. You know, we're 13, we're like, they don't know anything. And we get to 25 and go, I think they, oh shoot, should have listened.

Right? So, so, that's what he's calling them. And here's the danger. Okay? Now he gives a picture. Verse 58, as you go. So, so here, here's the problem with, with, with making a judgment within yourself.

As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an, make an effort to settle with him on the way. Lest he drag you into the judge and the judge hand you over to the officer and the officer put you in prison.

[40 : 03] I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the very last penny. In other words, here's the danger. Say you have a financial dispute. If you don't settle it before you go to, before the judge, you risk a lot.

Because if you were wrong and you get dragged before the judge and the judge says, the judge is making a division by the way, he's making a judgment and he puts you in prison, you, you could have gotten out of it earlier.

Here he's saying, if you'd get out of yourself and be sensible about this and judge it in a fair and honest way, see, often, we, we, we weren't in a lawsuit, but we were affected by a lawsuit.

A guy who swindled us and stole a bunch of our money. We didn't, we already lost a bunch of money, so we didn't want to hire an attorney to go try to criminalize, but other people did.

He took a bunch of money from a bunch of people and they pursued him and he's in prison now. He chose, because he took a lot of money and he couldn't, he couldn't show where it all went, obviously offshore somewhere, that after three years he gets out, he gets to have his million or whatever.

[41 : 28] I don't know. I don't know. But he did face judgment rather than own up and settle.

And that's the picture. And the picture's not really about a financial trial that you go into, that's just a, that's a parable to look at something bigger.

He's going to say, you need to settle before you come before the judge. You need to settle your accounts because you are way in, in, in hawk.

And the picture of you go to the debtor's prison until you pay every last cent. See, I've never made sense of that. How to, how if there's they're in prison, are they going to pay anything back? They're in prison.

They can't work. They can't earn anything. What are they going to do? They're totally dependent on family and friends to bail them out. Maybe he's going to say, okay, sell my kids. I don't know.

[42 : 35] What's he going to do? How's he going to pay his debt in debtor's prison? You're totally at the mercy of you're totally at the mercy of family and friends. And that's, but what's that picture of?

That picture Jesus is giving is of eternal judgment. That's the picture he's giving. Because where does he go next? Where does he go next?

Look at verse, now chapter 13, the first nine verses. There was some president at the very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Apparently, some Jews had come to Jerusalem to sacrifice. Maybe it was Passover that came and Pilate let out his soldiers and they massacred these people.

So their blood was mingled with the sacrifices that they had brought. They had brought their lamb. They had brought whatever they were going to sacrifice to God. And in the meantime, here's Rome

coming in and saying, slaughter those people.

[43 : 35] That's Pilate. By the way, remember Pilate, the big brave guy? Wash my hands. I don't want anything to do with it. And Jesus said, no, you're going to pay.

You're not going to pay as much as others, but you're going to pay for this. Anyway, so tragedy, right? Horrible. That Romans slaughtered people.

What's Jesus' answer? answer to tragedy? What's Jesus' answer to the wildfires in California?

Because we all hear it, we go, oh, how terrible.

Right? You have family out there? We have family out there. Right? What about the hurricanes that come hit the East Coast?

the Gulf? California, there's all kinds of dangers in California. You slide into the ocean, fires, you got it, earthquakes, and we used to live there without, no, it's no big deal.

[44 : 44] Then we moved to Illinois and we had a, what was it, a tornado warning? Scared the living daylight out of it. When the world is that? Give me an earthquake. All right.

Tragedies. I mean, we hear about them all the time. If we lived, if we lived a hundred years ago, we wouldn't hear about most of these because it would be months later by the time the news got to us. We got, we got this instant, I think we know too much today. I don't think we can handle all this kind of information. Too much, too soon. Too much. I can't, I can't, I got enough trouble here.

I can't deal with everybody else's trouble, but it makes me feel horrible. I mean, what Jesus, what Jesus brings up are both local things. So what's his response?

Right? Unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Same thing with the 18 who, who the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. And Jesus is bringing up the question.

[45 : 44] Do you think they, they were worse? Do you think they, they're more evil than everybody else? So the people that, that suffered in 9-11, were they worse than anybody else? The people that suffer in hurricanes, are they worse, are they worse, are they worse than anybody else?

Jesus is saying, no. No, they're not killed. They're, they, they don't suffer in that tragedy because they're worse. They're, just like the rest of us.

What that tragedy should bring to our mind, not only compassion and, and, and, and horror of it. Of course, it brings those things, but what Jesus is saying, it also should bring to our attention, life is fragile and it can happen to you.

Unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Yeah, that's the most important thing you need to get out of tragedies. Borrowed time. Life is short.

You don't know. It's like the rich man we read of earlier, you know, oh, I'm going to live my rest of my life, enjoy, you know, and God required his soul that very night.

[46 : 55] I don't know, is God going to require my soul at any moment? Do I live like that? I was thinking about that as we're worshiping this morning about the Puritans. Puritans used to think about their death all the time because they were preparing.

They knew life was short and they knew, and back then they didn't live as long as we do today. So they start preparing at age 40. Ridiculous, isn't it? I mean, 60, we don't even want to think about.

70. Well, your body starts falling apart and you're like, okay, what? That's what he's saying.

So life is fragile and then the other picture he gives is about that God's patience is limited. The parable of the fig tree, the fig tree that was not bearing fruit, right?

The vine dresser, the owner comes to the vine dresser and says, cut it down. I've had it for three years. It's fruitless. I'd have no more patience. Let it, you know, cut it down. Get rid of it.

[47 : 55] And the vine dresser says, no, Lord, give it one more year. Give it one more year. I'll put, I'll really work on it. I'll get the, I'll get it, the manure in there. We'll get, you know, water good. We'll make sure it bears fruit.

If it doesn't bear fruit after all that work, then okay, cut it down. What he's saying is not only is life limited, but God's patience is limited. God is patient with us. In fact, it's his patience that leads us to repentance.

It's because he's been gracious to us in our rebellion for so long. Ed and I say every Sunday morning, how you doing?

And we say what? We say better than I deserve, right? Better than I deserve. I deserve a tragedy to fall on me at any moment.

And so it's borrowed time. It's grace. So there's a sense of urgency. Time is running out. God, the creator, has given us life.

[48 : 59] What are we doing with it? And as believers, he's given us so many more gifts. What are we doing with those things? There'll come a day when he will say, well done.

Or, we're going to be weeping and he's going to be saved as if by fire. I don't like thinking about it. Do you like thinking about all this? Do you like kind of, it's too serious? It's like, don't want to go to a funeral and think about that. So what's the real issue?

Why do we resist turning to God? I'm not talking about just initially, but even in our Christian walk, we can wander, right? Prone to wander, prone to leave the God that I love because of my flesh. So what's the problem? Revelation 3, Jesus speaks to the church in Laodicea and he says to them, the words of the amen, the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

[50 : 03] He says to this church, I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Oh, I would that you were either hot or cold, but because you are lukewarm and neither hot or cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Why? What's the issue? For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, I have need, I have need of nothing, not realizing that in reality you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

So I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen and solved to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Strong words. But then he says, those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. He's speaking to the church.

He's speaking to the church. Be zealous and repent. Repent from your complacency. Repent from your lukewarmness. Repent from your thinking you're okay. I'm saved.

[51 : 16] I'm okay. Are you saved if you think you're okay? Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come out into him and eat with him and he with me. The one who conquers, the one who conquers, the one who conquers by being zealous and repenting, I will grant to him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. What's the issue? The issue is lukewarmness. The issue is complacency.

The issue is not being moved to think you're okay, to feel you have no need of God right now. You might say, you might sing, but in your heart, I'm unmoved.

I don't feel a need to turn to God. Lukewarm. That's a bad place to be.

[52 : 30] So hear the Lord's counsel if that is you or if that is you on the edge of that.

Be zealous and turn back to him. Repent just means to turn back to him. Turn back to him. Be zealous.

Be zealous. So how do you be zealous when you're lukewarm? One step at a time.

Cry out. You know what I've been doing lately? When I don't feel like praying, I'm trying this groaning thing. It says the Lord hears us when we don't know what to pray and he hears our groaning.

And I groan. Something. Better than nothing. And you know what? I can say a lot in a groan. My soul can speak.

[53 : 39] Like David says in 42, Psalm 42, my soul thirsts for you, pants for you, and at the same time, my soul is cast down.

How's that? Because I think when our soul is cast down, we're really panting for God. I think that's what David's saying. So if all you can get out is a pant, all you can get out is a groan, start there.

Start there. one step. One step. If all you can say is a confession, Lord, I don't want to, that's still a confession and that cleanses you to take the next step.

I have found that true. Right? If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us. And if all I can do is confess that I don't even want to do the right thing, you know what happens?

That gives me a power to do the next step that I didn't have with the first step because I confessed. And when I confessed where I am, it cleansed me.

[55 : 02] And you know what 1 John says about doing that with other believers? If you walk in the light, right? Together. It also has a cleansing effect. There's a whole nother kind of cleansing comes in confession with others.

I'm getting into a whole nother sermon here. Just trying to be real. Let's, let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for Jesus's words.

Oh, they are hard. They are hard. We, we love to, to read of his compassion. We love to read of his power and might. We love to read of his promises.

promises. And yet the real Jesus did not give us only half the gospel. He gave us the other side. The other side.

Why is it good news? Because there's also bad news. And so help us hear that again. Not to threaten us, not to shame us, but to awaken us. Grant us, Father, zeal to turn to you.

[56 : 09] We pray in Christ's name. Amen. When Bill sent the, the text that he was going to use for the message this morning, this one hit me as, it hit me hard as well.

And I expressed that to Bill. Because there's a reality that's in it. And the reality is this, and I just, I want to give you a little bit of a picture, something that happened in my past.

I used to help lead worship. The church I was at in Omaha, we would do jail ministry. And I would go in, and I'd bring a small sound system and a keyboard, and they'd have to inspect everything that you brought in and everything that you took back out to make sure.

But one of the gals was on the worship team. Her name was Lori. And she got up to talk. And, you know, you're, I would be leading the same type of music as what we sing here on Sunday mornings. And you're, my first thought was, are they really going to understand what we're doing here?

Because, we're singing hymns in a jail. And Lori got up one, one of the times that we did that.

[57 : 38] and she, it finally hit her like a holy two by four, four by four, four by six. And she took a deep breath and she says, I just realized that there's no difference between us as the worship team and the people that were sitting on the bleachers in the jail in this auditorium type multi-purpose room.

And she said, the only difference between us and you guys are, you guys got caught. And we didn't. I think the reason I'm supposed to tell you that, and I thought of it as I was sitting there, is because Bill told us Jesus resolutely set his sight, and I'm sorry, I'm not trying to preach again, but Jesus resolutely set his sights knowing his purpose.

He resolutely set his sights on Jerusalem. And how could he have not been immersed in what was going to happen to him as a human beforehand?

To be concerned about it, to be distressed. And I want to share something with you. Jesus was so willing for each and every one of you here and those that are listening at home and worshiping with us.

Jesus was so willing and there was an internal willingness from God that was motivated by unconditional love, which is also God, that is way above all human understanding.

[59 : 23] And what Bill's message was about this morning that God gave to us is it's time for each and every one of us on a daily basis, maybe multiple, probably multiple times a day.

We need to be diligent to set aside any willful resistance in our own hearts and our own minds. We need, it's time, to set aside willful resistance and oppositional defiance.

and the only way we can do that is recognizing that there's nothing good inside of us except for Jesus. I want to read something real short with you and this was written by Billy Graham.

And the reason, this is what I referred to at the beginning of the service about why I wanted to take the hymns a little bit slower today because I want you all to experience the joy, the blessing, the love, the forgiveness, the grace, and the mercy that comes to us while we sing.

It doesn't matter if it's hymns, it doesn't matter if it's new songs. The Bible talks about songs, hymns, and spiritual songs. But Billy Graham specifically refers to hymns here.

[60 : 43] And this is his word. Sometimes I'm afraid a hymn can become so familiar to us that we sing it without even thinking about the words.

But this is wrong because our singing becomes empty and meaningless. Don't let this happen to you, but meditate on the words of the songs that you sing and even turn them into a prayer.

So as we sing and we heard what Bill talked about today, the only thing we can do at this point in time to get rid of willful resistance and oppositional defiance is to recognize all we have to offer God right now is everything that he's already put inside of us.

So just as we are, just as I am, Lord, I offer my life to you. And so it's