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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
September 8, 2019
13th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 23:23-29; Hebrews 12:1-13
Hymns: 2; 409; 410; 413:6 (798:1,2,4)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 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. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: It seems natural to try to avoid distress and conflict --

Certainly there are people who enjoy distress but usually that is when they are on the giving end and not the

receiving end of that distress. There are people who find themselves living lives full of conflict, but really does anyone propose that we should follow that example and fill our lives and even our homes with conflict and distress?

In counseling we speak of that as dysfunction. We speak of dysfunctional homes and families, and how we can try to help such families reorder their lives so that they might live in peace and harmony and even with more than just a semblance of happiness.

So isn't that what Jesus is all about? Within a Christian home peace and harmony are great blessings. However that is not always the way things turn out. In our text our Lord Jesus speaks of the exact opposite being present in the lives of His disciples, and He was not speaking of only the lives of the twelve, but referring to what would come upon all those who are truly Jesus' disciples. In our text Jesus speaks of distress, and He doesn't talk about avoidance of this distress, but speaks of it as what should be expected first in His own life, and then also in the lives of His disciples, of His followers for all generations until the end of time. We are led by the Lord Jesus in -

THEME: Embracing the Distress of Faithfulness.

I. As Jesus Did in Bringing Us Salvation.

Jesus said:

Luke 12:49-50 "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!

Jesus was looking forward to the cross. Jesus had come into the world that the kingdom of God might come among men. Jesus had been preaching and teaching things concerning the kingdom of God for His entire ministry, calling people to repentance, and speaking plainly of the

need for the gospel of God's love and forgiveness that was to be found in Him, through faith in Him, and not in works of righteousness which we have done.

You know how that message was received by the leaders of the Jews and then also by most of the people of the Jews as well. They were offended by the things that Jesus said. For them Jesus was "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." (1 Peter 2:8) When in His bread of life sermon following the feeding of the 5000, Jesus taught the people that He was the **only** way to heaven many turned away from the Lord and did not follow Him anymore. The scribes and the Pharisees, and as well as the chief priests and Sadducees all rejected Jesus' message of salvation by the grace of God in Christ.

Jesus knew what lay ahead. He knew that the suffering that lay before Him was necessary. He knew and repeatedly taught His disciples that He would be taken by His enemies and suffer many things at their hands and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Jesus knew the full extent of the sufferings that lay before Him. Jesus knew that in the sufferings He was to endure He would also have the sins of the world laid upon Him, and that He would endure the curse of the law because of the sin of this world. He would not only be despised and rejected by men, but would fall under the curse of almighty God.

So it should not surprise us to hear Jesus' words, "*How distressed I am till it is accomplished!*" (v.50) Yeah, and who wouldn't be distressed knowing all that lay before them?! But here's the thing, our English word "distressed" doesn't really capture the full sense of the word that Jesus used, the emotion that He was experiencing. If we go back a few words in what Jesus said we grasp more of what was in His heart and mind as He spoke these words to the disciples. "*I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!*" (v.49) Jesus isn't talking about the destruction of the world; He's talking about the gospel going out into the world. The kindling of that fire of the

gospel was what took place in the High Priest's court, and in Pilate's palace, and on the cross of Calvary. When Jesus said He was distressed He was speaking of more than the anticipation of His sufferings, He was expressing His drive to meet that day, and on that day secure salvation for a lost mankind. This was a stress within His heart that drove Him forward to the cross, not away from it. It was not the compulsion of others forcing Him to His death, but the greatness of His love for you and me, and a world full of sinners. That love drove Him forward, to that baptism of suffering that would engulf His very being, yes to the depths of His soul.

If we are to comprehend the distress of faithfulness we must turn to Jesus and learn of Him and His faithfulness to cause, to the mission of salvation that lay before Him. He would not be turned aside. He would not be turned away from fulfilling that which the Father had sent His Son into the world to accomplish. Distressing indeed, but Jesus embraced this distress and was faithful to His mission to win salvation for us.

Jesus embraced this distress --

II. As We Gladly Do as His Disciples.

One might say that Jesus is bringing full disclosure of what lay ahead for the disciples. This full disclosure is recorded for us as well. We have sworn our faithfulness to Jesus. It is part of our baptismal vows. Then again in our confirmation vows we pledge our faithfulness to Jesus and His truth. These aren't just words, they are **vows** of faithfulness. We **swear** before Almighty God that we shall be faithful unto *and* until death. We stand by the Word of God as the only source of truth for faith and life. We do this because in His Word God has revealed to us the truth of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer from sin and death and the Lord of our lives. Let me restate that truth. We know Jesus as our Redeemer and as the Lord of our lives because God has revealed Himself and our Savior to us in His Word that we might believe and be saved. God's Word is truth,

and Jesus is revealed to us as the one and only way to God and eternal life.

I trust that you don't have a problem with that. But what comes with that? Jesus made the full disclosure of what comes with that faithfulness to Him and His Word. That is what our text reveals.

Luke 12:51-13 “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.

We know that Jesus is all about peace. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That, my friends, is the greatest, most important and most impossible peace to secure. And yet Jesus secured our peace. That peace is with God. That is not peace on this earth among the people of this earth. That the Lord said would not be to the very end of the earth when He returns again in judgment.

Now for us we are encouraged repeatedly in Scripture to live in peace with our brethren and to “pursue peace with all people.” (Hebrews 12:14) The problem lies with the world, a sinful world, a world that takes exception with the truth of God's Word. The world is very persuasive, and enticing, and when the world needs to be it can be very hard. So your pledge of faithfulness will bring opposition not only from the world out there, but from your own family, your own loved ones when the world encroaches into their minds and hearts.

God's Word speaks quite clearly about what is right and what is sin.

The world doesn't agree, and so the world will seek to disabuse you of any truth of God's Word that doesn't go

along with the current ideas and values put forth by the world. That difference may be found with the Scripture's teaching concerning sexual morality, and marriage and divorce, or the sanctity of life as the world makes its judgments concerning abortion, which in some states now includes killing of babies immediately following a live birth. If you say these things are sin, you will be hated.

We can't cave. God's truth is God's truth. It may be that some will test your faithfulness regarding origins of the universe or of mankind. If you abide by His inspired Word you will be labeled as ignorant, and if you had any hopes of teaching in any college or university in America, it will be held against you. Indeed, you may be publicly held up for ridicule, and may even be sued in a court of law.

These things many Christians have faced, and more. This is distress that has been embraced by many who have gone before us. Many have indeed sacrificed life rather than turning away from faithfulness to Jesus and His Word. We can certainly appreciate how the disciples after the coming of the Holy Spirit, by the power of the Holy Spirit, faced persecution and most died a martyr's death. We are told of one of the early incidents of persecution they endured in Acts chapter 5.

Acts 5 40-42 "When they (that is the Sanhedrin) had called for the apostles and **beaten** *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ."

You see how in faith they embraced the distress of faithfulness. They rejoiced that they were found worthy of suffering for Jesus' sake, and they persisted in believing and in teaching the truth of God's Word, the truth of the gospel of a crucified and risen Lord.

Full disclosure: Jesus said this would come right into your own home. This congregation has endured distress time and again as it was tested by events that challenged the truth of God's Word. Time and again those who were near and dear turned away and went their own way. That's hard. It is even harder when it comes into your home and family. I count myself blessed that my daughters stand by the truth of Christ along with me and my wife. It is not always that way. Jesus forewarned that families would endure distress as some would chose the way of the world instead of the way of Christ, and the way of the cross. This is a far more difficult trial, a more painful distress, and yet it is one we may be called upon not only to endure but to embrace in our faithfulness to Christ and His Word of truth.

The comfort that comes to us is the comfort of the gospel itself. Jesus assures us that we are His people and that we will know the pleasures of heaven forevermore. He stands beside us and He shall never ever leave us nor forsake us. Strength comes to us from the gospel itself. We draw strength from Jesus and the distress of faithfulness He knew and endured as He set His face for Jerusalem where He would endure the pain of His Father forsaking Him in Jesus' most difficult hour, right there upon the cross. The faithfulness of our Savior leads us down the road of life and salvation strengthening us as we endure, indeed, as we embrace the distress of faithfulness to our Savior God.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.