

✠ Luke 12:49-56 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

There it is my dear brothers and sisters. Jesus did not come to bring peace but division. Now how can the one who says, “My peace I leave with you,” (John 14:27) also say, “Do you think I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division” (Luke 12:51). The answer is simple in light of St. Paul’s rhetorical question, “Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:13). Of course Christ is not divided. He is the most undivided entity there is. There is no division in Christ.

Neither, then, is there division in Christ's body, the Church. As He Himself says, “every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls” (Luke 11:17). Yet He promises that His Church will stand against the gates of hell and that His reign is eternal (Matthew 16:18b; Hebrews 7:17). Thus, there is no division in the congregation of the saints, His holy catholic Church, for the Church’s one doctrine is summed up in the person of Christ. Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:24-25). This is necessary to believe. Without belief in this article no one can be saved. Subsumed into this article are all other articles of Christian doctrine and teaching, including the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the love of God.

Therefore what Jesus says here to His disciples, “I have come to bring division,” He rightly clarifies by saying, “on earth.” That is, “It is not in my Father’s house that there is division for I am not divided. But on earth where there is sin and lies, deceit and murder, where the prince of darkness rules and goes about spreading filthy lies and conjuring up heretics and false prophets, there there will be division. For where the truth is told, liars will fight against it; and where lies abound, the truth must suffer distain and hardship and mockery.”

Give ear, O Christian; for you who think that your faith will peaceably move in and out of the crowds of men are in for a rude and volatile awakening. Give ear, O sons of God; for you who think that men will leave you be even though or because you believe in the Son of God, you to shall be baptized with Christ's baptism and suffer the fate of your Master.

Do not be falsely comforted by vain hopes of peaceful relations with sinful man. For what does hay have to do with straw? What do the sons of perdition have to do with the sons of God?

You will be turned on and betrayed, hated and scorned, even by those of your own household, your own local congregation, or your own friends around the water cooler. You will have your life picked apart and your reputation dashed on trumped-up charges and wicked lies. But you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, are commanded not to retaliate. Do not return evil with evil, but, as the blessed apostles writes, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:20-21). Just as our Lord Jesus overcame evil not by destroying those who are evil but by forgiving their many trespasses.

The road to salvation is lined with would-be assassins, and the way to eternal life looses

many travelers. Thus it is easy to follow the seductive call of the sirens, luring you to leave the straight and narrow and find anonymity in the crowds of man, forgetting your baptism and confirmation vows. It is easy to loose yourself into the culture of sin and decadence because such a culture often seems placid and harmless and easily defended against. But it is not. It will kill your faith and steal your soul.

If this were not so, why does Jesus warn His would-be followers that they will persecuted and killed because of His name (Matthew 5:11), but to be as men on watch? Why do the holy apostles and blessed fathers exhort and encourage their hearers to avoid sin and the lusts of the flesh? Not just sexual lusts but also greed, malice, envy, strife, vainglory, covetousness, and dissention among fellow believers. Therefore let us lay aside every weight and sin, which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1). That is, let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who turned neither to the right nor to the left but remained on the narrow road to Calvary where He paid for our sins with His body and poured out His blood for the many.

He scorned the shame of the cross for the joy set before Him – His Church. You. You are His joy for which He died and suffered all manner of evil and shame at the hands of Satan and his army. For you He drank from the cup of God’s anger, draining the dregs of the chalice of His Father’s wrath that burned against us children of men. This was His baptism with which He was baptized that distressed him so. Yet He did not delay His purpose beyond the time set by the Father, but in the fullness of time He voluntarily laid down His life for friend and enemy, Pharisee and apostle, Jew and Gentile, you and me – sinners, one and all.

Yet man in his folly and sin cannot predict the times even though the signs are clear. One thinks humankind is progressing in morality and justice while another takes advantage of this and kills his fellow man, committing mass genocide. One thinks man is free and autonomous and so happily goes about killing unborn children while cursing anyone who cuts down a tree or kills a fish to feed his family. Though they have eyes they do not see, and though they have ears they do not understand. What does it profit a man if he gains the world and loses his soul (Mark 8:36)?

But with His baptism of death Jesus threw fire upon the earth. Fire that consumes and refines, destroys and purifies, hardens and melts. The kindling of this fire is not wood and straw but the hearts of men burning within them, either to their destruction or to their salvation. Such are the words of Christ, “when [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11). Thus our Lord, not having the vengeful mind we possess, heaped burning hot coals on our heads, not to give us a “what for” but to cleanse us and burn away the sin and decadence that haunts us.

Such is the hammer that is the Word of God. Can man hide himself in secret places that God cannot see (Jeremiah 23:24)? Does not the eye of God see even the darkest corners of a man’s soul? What sins do you think are hidden from the prying eyes of God? Repent, confess your sins and God will see them no more. They will truly be out of the sight and mind of God.

But do not wish for an easy time of it. That is, don’t think that confession is easy or that it gets easier with the passing of time, or that sins become less real and less potent the older and

more established you become. Such thoughts are not biblical. Don't be fooled into thinking that at this stage in your Christian life and walk you do not need to confess sins any longer. Do not be deceived, believing that you are mostly good and only sin occasionally. Such thoughts are dangerous. They make you complacent about your faith and lazy in your prayers. For such lies are the words of the false prophets and wolves in sheep's clothing.

They will preach vain hopes, saying that it will be well with you no matter what you do or say, confess or believe, because you are called a Christian. And don't think that such false prophets and preachers always stand in pulpits or are broadcasted on television and so are easy to avoid. They are often, in fact, not so noticeable. They often come disguised in quip sayings and ecumenically passive quotes like, "As long as you believe in God you're doing better than most," or, "at least we agree on Jesus and the Word of God." Or perhaps the best one of them all: "As long as you preach Christ crucified you'll be alright." Really? Are we so foolish as to think the Pharisees didn't take God seriously? Are we incapable of understanding that heresies also preach Christ crucified? Or are we blind to Jesus' words that many are called but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14)?

We don't like to hear this sort of preaching because it demands adherence and action. We want our Christianity to smell and look good and require nothing of us. So we easily call foul, and accuse such ideas as being works righteousness. We want everything we do to be considered under our freedom as a Christian. No one can tell us what to do. But now our Lord calls foul and points us to His Word: "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (1 Peter 2:16). Our works do not save us, they merely testify to what we believe in our heart. Doing good to our neighbors, suffering evil for their sakes, because Christ suffered evil for your sake, is living under the cross. Doing good to our neighbor because it makes us feel good or because we desire the praises of men, no matter how much we deny it, is living a theology of glory.

The Word of God causes division because man will not cease to prattle on about his own vain desires and pointless dreams. But God does not confuse the issue or speak in unknown tongues. He speaks plain words using the speech of men. Repent and be baptized. That is, turn from your wickedness and self-deceit, your pride and idolatry and God will carve you like a skilled physician cutting away dead flesh. He will remove from you what damns you and put in its place His Spirit who gives life.

Thus the division brought by the Son of God is felt in your heart. It causes you to curse yourself even while trusting in the promises of God in the name of Christ. You fight with your family and yell at your children while in the same breath saying that you love them. You think evil against your husband and disdain your wife, even while knowing that such thoughts are not from God. You want to do better, and to love as Christ would have you love, but you cannot stop hating and complaining.

For these reasons, and the thousands that come on their heels, confess your sins that you may hear the comforting and peaceful words of our Lord Jesus, "Your sins are forgiven. Go and sin no more."

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠