

Title: THE FIGHT FOR THE SOULS OF MEN, LUKE 12:49-56.
(Chatham, NJ; 08/15/10, AM) [E – Topical]

Theme: Jesus came to destroy the kingdom that rivals his, and although this brings about division in families and among friends, it is the destruction of the kingdom of evil that allows us to repent and turn back to God.

Purpose: To demonstrate that Jesus made a declaration of war against evil and that he offers repentance and the Gospel to all who turn back to God.

Introduction:

1. Because we think of Jesus strictly as a man of peace, this passage confuses us.
2. He came with a sword to cause division.
3. The metaphor is akin to the picture of Jesus with his winnowing fork (Luke 3:17) with which he will separate the wheat from the chaff and destroy the chaff. He separates good from evil.
4. He knows that the Kingdom of God rivals the kingdom of the world and will create turmoil even among family members.

I. Not Peace, Division, Luke 12:51.

- Herod knew that his kingdom could not exist peaceably with a rival; that is why he sought to have Jesus killed.
- Remember Nebuchadnezzar's dream? The last of the four kingdoms would be obliterated by the Kingdom of God (symbolized by a rock not formed by man).
- Such an effort cannot take place without a battle: even among friends and families.
- The prophet Micah knew such anguish, Micah 5:5-7.

II. Repent or Perish, 13:1-5.

- These are our choices; neither one sits well with us.
- The point of these two situations is to make this personal.
- These reflect blindness to personal sin.
- We sometimes assume that others are worse.
- Jesus makes it clear that we, like all men, are on a collision course with destruction.

III. The Stakes Are High.

- Change or die! (God doesn't negotiate with us.)
- Get rid of your sinful life or suffer the punishment of damnation.
- Hebrews 9:27, "...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment."
- Ephesians 5:6, "...because of these things [verse 5] the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."
- That God could and will engage in such an act of judgment divides people: some can't believe God does that, others resent it, while still others submit and choose repentance.

IV. An Olive Branch from God.

- Repentance is an opportunity. (We must see it this way.)
- God loved us enough to give us the choice.
- God is "...patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish," 2 Peter 3:9.
- Can we justify being resentful because God doesn't offer any other choices?
- Take the Olive Branch; the Bible calls it the Gospel.

V. Repentance is the First Step in the Gospel.

- It is a change of behavior, a turning of one's life away from sin and darkness and turning it over to God.
- It is the first message of John, Jesus, and Peter. (Explain.)
- Paul insists that Christians put off the old self and put on the new, Eph.4:22-23.

- Those who see their sins change their lives accordingly.
- Those who don't sometimes feel judged by your decision: this may be one of the sources of division that Jesus refers to.

VI. As to the Matter of Peace.

- We are offered peace with God (Luke 2:14, "among those with whom he is pleased.").
- Jesus personally bestows the blessing of peace, Jn. 14:27.
- But not with the world that sets itself against the Kingdom of God; this world hates Jesus and us, John 15:18-19.
- Once again we see the divisiveness of Jesus clarified.

VII. Save Yourselves.

- Acts 2:40 – Peter's exhortation
- Acts 3:19-23 – repentance, refreshment, but destruction.
- Acts 17:30-31 – all men everywhere called to repent

Conclusions:

1. The Gospel of repentance and salvation is what we proclaim today.
2. Believe in Jesus, be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and live faithfully to his commands.
3. Avail yourselves of the peace he offers; he won't offer it forever, and those who refuse will suffer the consequences.
4. Make your choice today.