

"The Real Jesus"

Text: Luke 12:49-53

May you find comfort and peace in the certain knowledge that the very Savior you know, Jesus Christ, is the one and only gate to heaven. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians: Do you ever grow weary of the hypocrisy, the insincerity and pretext of it all? There is so much in our world that is just phony, fake, pretentious. I saw an ad the other day for what is essentially a girdle for men. Seriously. The ad promised a slimmer, fitter, trimmer you the instant you strapped on this glorified girdle. No one seriously believes that it will actually make you slimmer, fitter, or trimmer; it will just *look* that way. I'll bet they even sell them with built-in "washboard abs." It's all just appearance, facade, pretend.

Examples of hypocrisy and pretense fill our world. Our society is all atwitter again about the need to pass "meaningful gun control legislation" to prevent future mass shootings. Does anyone really believe that attempting to control inanimate objects will affect human behavior? Did you know that 10 times more Americans die each year falling out of bed than the total number killed in mass shootings *in the history of our nation*? If it were really just about saving lives, folks would be clamoring for "meaningful bed control legislation." Again, it's all façade and pretense. It's fake. There are always puppet masters and there's always an ulterior motive driving the pretense.

In fact it's to the point now where it's hard to tell who and what is real and who and what is not. Our elected officials look us right in the eye and lie – and everyone *knows* and just *accepts* that they are being lied to. Smiling, charming people turn out to be pedophiles, rapists, and murderers. How can you ever be sure that you really know someone - anyone? Our text for this morning helps with that very question, because, in the end, we really only need to know one person, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the forces of evil have done an incredible job of disguising and obscuring the real Jesus. Our text serves us well in sorting out that confusion, teaching us the truth about the *real Jesus*. Our text is found in Luke's Gospel, the Twelfth Chapter:

ESV **Luke 12:49-53** (Jesus said) **"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! ⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ⁵² For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against**

three. ⁵³ 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."

So far the words delivered to us by God the Holy Spirit. Though so many have abandoned this truth, may you forever remain convinced that these words are indeed the words *of God* – altogether therefore true and right. Fully convinced that God is the author of these words, so we this morning pray, **"Sanctify us by Your Truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

It is simply neither fair nor accurate to take only *part* of what a human being says and does while on this earth and to base our picture of that individual on that limited evidence. One good deed or characteristic doesn't make a bad person good, nor does one misdeed make a good person bad. Every evil individual in history has done something laudable, and every good person has done something bad. A small part of a human being doesn't define or encapsulate that human being. Yet, in a way, this is exactly the sort of thing that our society has done with Jesus. They have taken part of the man and a part of what he said and turned it into the whole. They have, for example, made him into some sort of a peace activist who went through life begging tolerance for all and from all. They urge: *"See how gently he dealt with the prostitute caught in the very act. Surely this is evidence that Jesus was not overly upset by such conduct."* Forgotten is the undoubtedly stern **"Go and sin no more"** with which he sends her away. Or they argue: *"See how he associates with sinners of every kind. Surely he would not do so if he condemned such lifestyles and actions."* Forgotten is the fact that he associated with sinners to convert and save them – to turn them from their sin, not to confirm them in it. *"See how he calls himself the 'Prince of Peace.'* Surely he must be of the opinion that religious and ideological differences are not worth fighting over." Forgotten are the words of our text for this morning: **"Do you think I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."** We must take in the whole picture of the man if we are rightly to understand the man himself.

Would Jesus rather see peace on earth? Of course. Would he rather see peace *at any cost*? By his own words, no. Simple test: *Would Jesus have come to earth to suffer and die if that were true?* Our text answers. Jesus came **"to send fire on the earth."** In his own words he came to bring not peace but division. This is not the same Jesus the world knows – not by any stretch of the imagination. How is it then

possible that someone who calls himself **"the Prince of Peace"** one minute can say words like these the next?

Those who do not know the answer to this question very likely also have a strange idea of just what it means to be a Christian. Christianity is not only the warm fuzzy glow. Our text teaches us that the full picture must also include the cold hard steel of condemnation for all who reject Jesus. It is, after all, all about Jesus. He is that dividing point between heaven and hell. That's why it is not only true that **"whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."** It is also just as true that **"he who does not believe will be condemned."**

Tragically, then, we must first establish what it means to be a Christian. The most common misconception today is that a Christian is someone who does good deeds. That's like defining a police officer as someone who eats doughnuts. A police officer is someone who protects the public by enforcing our laws. A football player is someone who plays football. A baseball player is someone who plays baseball. A Christian is someone who believes that Jesus Christ paid for all of his sins on the cross of Calvary. This faith in Jesus changes us, and that change will manifest itself in many different ways. It creates in us the desire to help others - financially, morally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. As Christians we are not perfect in our struggle to carry out the love that we have for fellow sinners, but the new man heart is right. In fact no one *but* the Christian should ever imagine that he or she is right with God. The Bible makes it clear to us in Hebrews 11 that **"without faith it is impossible to please God."**

With this as our definition of a Christian we can gain some other insights. A Christian cannot be defined as someone who goes to church each Sunday, but the new man in every Christian does want to worship his God whenever he has opportunity. A Christian cannot be defined as someone who never uses foul language, although the new man in every Christian will always strive to build up and edify others by what he says. A Christian cannot be defined as someone who studies his Bible or holds regular family devotions, although – again – the new man in every Christian will surely struggle to do just that. A Christian therefore can only be defined as one who believes in Jesus Christ, trusting that Jesus, and Jesus alone, is his Savior. It is only through faith in Jesus, and what he has done, that anyone can have true peace with God and confidence on the Day of Judgment.

Why is it so important to hold fast to this definition without wavering? Several reasons. First, if we lose track that Christianity, the only path to

heaven, is a matter of faith in the heart, we will quickly fall prey to the devil's lie that Christianity is all about earning God's love by the good things we do.

Second, to forget that Christianity is a matter of the heart is to misunderstand and despise what Jesus came to earth to do for us. He did not come to empower us to do our part. He did not come to give us an example as to how to earn God's love by our behavior. He did not come to proclaim toleration for all different doctrines, religions, and lifestyles. He came to do for us what we could never do for ourselves; to do for us what nonetheless *had* to be done if we were to inherit heaven. He came to keep the law perfectly; to fulfill the law's every demand. Here we find an amazing truth, unique to Christianity: What Jesus did is now credited to you and me - as if we ourselves did it. *Jesus'* perfection is now *our* perfection. It is our personal possession the moment we are brought to trust that Jesus did what the Bible says he did – that he died to pay for our sins. To deny this fact is to deny the true Christian faith.

Third, to miss the definition of a Christian would be to forever misunderstand exactly what Jesus is talking about in our text for this morning.

What *did* Jesus mean when he said in our text that he came to bring division rather than peace? Up until the coming of Christ, mankind did not and could not know its Savior. He was nameless and faceless. Those who were saved were saved only through faith in the *promise* that a Savior would one day be sent, and referred to him only by his prophesied titles such as "Messiah," "the Christ," and "Son of David." All of that changed the moment Jesus yielded up his life on the cross of Calvary. This is what Jesus was talking about in our text when he spoke of **"a baptism I have to be baptized with."** He was talking about his own suffering and death. No wonder he also then said, **"and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!"** Who wouldn't be distressed to know that God the Father was about to direct the sum total of his righteous wrath for every single sin upon him? That is exactly what Jesus faced on Good Friday. The full fury of God's wrath toward every single sin was hurled down upon the previously sinless Son of God. At that moment, God the Father **"made him to be sin for us."** (2 Corinthians 5:21) There he silently bore the wrath that you and I deserved.

Something pivotal, something earth shattering and eternally significant happened the moment this sacrifice *was* accomplished. The moment

Jesus uttered those supremely powerful words from the cross, **"It is finished!"** and then **"yielded up His spirit"** he became the dividing point for every man, woman, and child on earth. Completing the work he came to do, Jesus then and there was positively and conclusively identified as the only possible Savior from sin and hell. The Bible repeatedly makes this clear, as when we read in Acts 4:12, **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."** Therefore to believe that Jesus is the Savior is also to believe that he is the *only* savior. Jesus himself said, **"No one comes to the Father, but by me."** Before Jesus was born, believers were saved by faith in *the promise of a Savior*. When he came, however, he put a name and a face to that Savior. In this way he became the dividing point forever after. From that point on, a person's belief about Jesus will forever be that which determines whether that human being spends an eternity in heaven or in hell. This is how Jesus now serves as the razor sharp blade that separates believer from unbeliever, the saved from the damned.

Was this what Jesus came to do? Yes and no. He certainly came to save, but it was an unfortunate fact that there would also be those who would reject him and die eternally. Though certainly not his desire, this is also an inescapable fact of his coming. 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that Jesus **"wants all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth."** Again in 2 Peter 3:9 we read, **"The Lord is... longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."** To say therefore that Jesus came to condemn those who reject him would be like saying that firemen enter burning buildings to lecture the dying on the folly of playing with matches. And yet Jesus knew full well that countless souls *would* reject him. He knew that millions would choose death rather than life, human works rather than God's grace. Others, he also knew, *would* by the Holy Spirit come to believe in him and be saved. Herein lies the **"division"** he came to bring. He loved mankind too deeply to allow us to slip peacefully, quietly, undisturbed into the night of eternal torment. In the end, Jesus came to provide the only alternative to hell, the only means of escape, the only chance that mankind would ever get. In this way he came to create that unavoidable **"division."**

But therein he is also the greatest of all "uniters." In the last half of our text Jesus demonstrates just how deep and painful this division will be in some families. He warns us ahead of time that it will divide even the closest family ties – father against son, mother against daughter, and so on. Yet note well also the great bond of unity that is the possession of all who believe in him. Listen to how Jesus himself describes the unity he gives to those who believe in him: **"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may**

all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:20-26)

This is what Jesus wants for every single human being – the most intimate and eternal of bonds, with him and with each other, in Christ. Though he came knowing many would be lost, he came not to condemn but to save, and to give this gift.

The real Jesus is therefore the dividing point – life eternal for all who believe, but death to all who do not. There is no gray area here, so we dare not act or speak as if there is. He is not an island, around which a river flows only to arrive at the same place. To be on the wrong side of Jesus Christ is to be lost eternally. To be on the right side of Jesus means to believe on him, and to trust that he paid your sin debt. By the working of the Holy Spirit within you, you know the real Jesus, and in him you have eternal life. Cherish this gift you have been given. It is your greatest possession. Amen.

ESV **Jeremiah 23:23-31** "Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. ²⁵ I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' ²⁶ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, ²⁷ who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? ²⁸ Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. ²⁹ Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? ³⁰ Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who steal my words from one another. ³¹ Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, who use their tongues and declare, 'declares the LORD.'

ESV **Hebrews 12:1-3** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ ¶ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – August 18, 2019

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 270 (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus Calls Us o'er the Tumult"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Jeremiah 23:23-31) Our First Lesson reminds us that a lack of immediate, visible punishment does not mean God approves of evil – including false teaching. The evil, the lies and the false teaching will continue to the end of time, but there judgment awaits. Our calling is to go on sharing not our own ideas but the truth of God's Word – with a world that sorely needs to hear it.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 100 (Page 35)

The Second Lesson: (Hebrews 12:1-3) Some have summarized the theme of the Book of Hebrews as *Don't give up!* We hear evidence to support this theme in our second lesson. Having worked saving faith in our hearts, the Holy Spirit has set us on the path to heaven. Yet we still possess the awful power to throw away our faith and our salvation. Nothing tempts us toward such foolishness as powerfully as the cares and pleasures of this earthly life. We are also here reminded how foolish it would be for us to imagine that we would escape all hardship and persecution here on earth, or that we are never in need of the Lord's loving discipline to keep us from wandering.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (Brown Hymnal page 15)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 281 (Stanzas 1-2) (Red Hymnal)

"The Savior Calls, Let Every Ear"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 12:49-53 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"The Real Jesus"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post Sermon Hymn – 446 (Red Hymnal)

"Rise, My Soul, to Watch and Pray"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 281 (Stanza 4) (Red Hymnal)

"The Savior Calls, Let Every Ear"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (44) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship and coffee hour

CLC News – Pastor Theodore Barthels has returned the call to Prince of Peace of Loveland. Pastor Richard Kanzenbach has returned the calls to Redeemer of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich. Pastor Andrew Schaller has returned the call to Bethel of Morris. Miss Miriam Bernthal has accepted the call to be full time preschool teacher at Faith of Markesan.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet this morning during the fellowship hour.

Book Available – A sequel to Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer's book *Standing on the Wall* has been prepared and is in the final stage of review. It is titled *Christ -- No Other Foundation*. The book is 373 pages and touches on a variety of Scriptural teachings and studies. It includes both prose and poetry. The planned release date is around Reformation and the projected cost is \$15. If you are interested in ordering a copy, please let Pastor Roehl know. A review copy can be made available in case you want to try before you buy.

Annual Church Picnic – Our thanks to those who planned last Sunday's Annual Church Picnic. Good food and fellowship, as always.

Contact Sheet – Updated church contact sheets have been distributed in all member mailboxes. There are also a few extra copies on the mailbox table. Please let Pastor Roehl know if you would like an electronic version emailed to you.