

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“DISCERNING THE TIMES”

For individual study or group discussion

Continuing in our study of Luke 12, Jesus persists in warning his followers to keep the end in view. His directive to the disciples becomes all the more serious as the message of his mission reveals a sharper focus which will converge at the cross. In verses 49-59, there is a wake-up call to *the reality of distress in Jesus (vv. 49-50)*, *the inevitability of division because of Jesus (vv. 51-53)* and *the urgency for discernment concerning Jesus (vv. 54-59)*. These hard sayings spoken by Jesus are crucial, because judgment is coming and we need to be sober-minded, *discerning the times*.

The reality of distress in Jesus (vv. 49-50)

As we come to the conclusion of Luke 12, the tone of Jesus' warnings to the average listener can come across as hard sayings; especially verse 49 where Jesus declares the reason for his incarnation is to “cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!” But he doesn't stop there. He goes on to talk about the distress he is feeling from his impending “baptism” (v. 50). Pastor and theologian, Leon Morris, explains: “Jesus' coming means judgment. He looks forward to its being kindled, i.e. at the cross, the focus of all his activities. Jesus is saying that God's plan is for salvation that involves judgment, but a judgment that the Messiah will bear for others, not one he will inflict on others. It is not an attractive prospect, but Jesus longs for it to come, for only so can the saving work be accomplished.”¹

- In Mark 10:38-39, Jesus admonishes the naivete of James and John's request with a warning that his “baptism” would be a bitter cup to drink. Read Luke 22:41-44. Describe the embodied distress that Jesus felt over the cup prepared for him at the cross.
- Read Romans 6:3-4. As believers, to what does our baptism point us?

The inevitability of division because of Jesus (vv. 51-53)

In verses 51-53, here we read of the “Prince of Peace” bringing division. We see a different side of Jesus as he describes the polarizing effect his presence will have upon the world (cf. Matthew 12:30). In Luke 12, we get a glimpse of Jesus as both lion and lamb. Not only is he the sacrifice that bears the sins of many, but the king whose sword will divide even families (Matthew 10:34-39).

- Read Gen. 49:9-10. When Jacob blesses Judah, he refers to him as the “lion's cub” and says that “the scepter shall not depart from Judah,” conveying Christ's kingship. How does the great throne room scene in Rev. 5 reconcile the imagery of both Jesus as lion and lamb?

The urgency for discernment concerning Jesus (vv. 54-59)

Warning against pretenders, Jesus uses the climate to illustrate their hypocrisy. Capable and observant enough to predict shifts in weather patterns, they were unable to detect the coming of the Kingdom of God in the very events unfolding before them. So in the final verses of Luke 12, Jesus concludes with a strong rebuke and urgent warning: now is the time for discernment. Make an effort to “seek the Lord while he may be found” (Isaiah 55:6), before being taken before the judge at the final judgment.

- Read 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. Why should there be an urgency for discernment concerning Jesus? (See also Hebrews 3:7-19.)

DATE: September 10, 2023

SPEAKER: Brian/Frank

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 12:49-59

Family Dinner Table

“The Ides of March”

In the opening scenes of Shakespeare's classic history play, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, Julius Caesar returns to Rome in triumph from far-flung wars. As he is walking along a street with his entourage amid the crowds, he hears his name being called out. Caesar stops and looks into the crowd to see who has called his name. A soothsayer steps forward and proceeds to speak a prophetic, urgent warning: “Beware the Ides of March!” Later at home, Caesar's wife Calpurnia warns him not to attend the Senate meeting that day. She had strange dreams and portents of his death that were brought on by the overnight storms. But Brutus arrives on the scene, and with his persuasions, appeals to Caesar's pride. Lacking the discernment to recognize the difference between love and flattery, Caesar heads to the Capitol and consequently, to his death.²

- Failing to discern the times can be disastrous. According to Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111:10, how do we discern the times?
- Read Colossians 2:3. Who is our starting point for discernment?

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¹ Morris, Leon. *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*. 1974. Leister, England. Inter-Varsity Press. 240

² Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles, eds. Folger Shakespeare Library. Accessed on Sept.6, 2023. Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library. <https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/julius-caesar/read/>