

# “I Came Not to Bring Peace, but Division” // Luke 12:49–53 // *The Difficult Sayings of Jesus*

---

Welcome back, everybody! **Lot of people last week:**

- Over 10,000 at all of our campuses. Baptized about 170.
- **Thank you for volunteering.** What we did last weekend was a huge operation: over 1300 of you volunteered.
- I also want to **thank you for inviting** people...
  - The vast majority of people who got baptized last weekend came by personal invitation.
  - Nothing we will ever do as a church—no advertising strategy, musical program—can replace you simply inviting people. **Every survey we’ve ever done** shows that’s the #1 reason people come here: personal invitation.

And I want to welcome back, specifically, those of you who may have used last week as a catalyst to get back into church, or maybe to start pursuing a relationship with God.

- I saw a girl last week after church that couldn’t be here... I recognized her, but she admitted she hadn’t been in a while. (guilty look)... I said, “You know, we’re actually having an amnesty Sunday coming up, where you can come back to church, slide into your seat, no questions asked.” She looked at me and said, “Really... *What week is that?*” “Uhh... Next week.” So this is (amnesty week...)

We’re in a series called “*The Difficult Sayings of Jesus,*” and the big idea behind this series is that many people have a serious **misconception** about Jesus, that he was this tranquil, unflappable religious guru who just went around spreading peace, love and groovy vibes. The **real Jesus** was polarizing: you **either loved him or**

**hated him.** The more attractive he grew to some, the more loathsome he grew to others. While certain people thronged to him, others plotted his death.

- That’s how you know you’ve **encountered the real Jesus**, btw. You either love him or hate him.
- Most people today find Jesus boring, or sentimental... no one in the Bible ever found him boring or sentimental. That shows many people have never encountered the real thing.

These difficult statements Jesus made should help you understand which side of that line you are on. Do you love him or hate him?

The difficult statement we’re going to look at this week comes from:

## Luke 12:49–53/Matthew 10:37–39

<sup>49</sup> “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!

And here’s the statement: <sup>51</sup> Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.

- *Not peace, but division?* You say, I thought Jesus was “the prince of peace?”
  - Some translations even say, “a sword,” here, which is literally what it says in Greek. (The NIV, which I am using, says “division” because he’s not talking about inciting violence, but how his message will cause bitter division between people.)
- See how it continues...

<sup>52</sup> From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup> They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

- Jesus is going to divide some families... some of you have experienced that.
- Why? Because his claims are so absolute you can't be ambivalent about him...

*The Gospel of Matthew adds these words at the end at the end of this teaching:* **37** "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. **38** Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. **39** Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:37–39)

OK, so...

- *Jesus came not to bring peace, but division?*
- *I'll end up separating people within a household?*
- *And unless you love me more than your own family you can't be my disciple?*
- *Like a triple threat of difficult statements*

**I want to do 4 things today...**

1. Deal with a widely-held myth
2. Expose a staggering claim
3. Reveal an incredible motivation
4. Ask a few very practical questions

## **I. A Widely-Held Myth: Christianity is More Divisive than Other Viewpoints**

- Some of you hear this and say, "Well, yes, I've always known Christianity is divisive... Bible-thumping Christians are always causing division..."
- And the assumption is that other viewpoints are tolerant and inclusive, but Jesus' message is intolerant and exclusive.
- But see all viewpoints, when you get down to the roots, are ultimately exclusive.

- **For example**, say I were an elder at the Unitarian church (a church that teaches that all faith perspectives are equally valid). I am the teaching pastor... and I decide one week to do a comparison between Buddhism and Christianity. And I discover that **Buddhism teaches** there is no personal God, that there's just this life force; there's no such thing as the wrath of God, just good karma, and that by trying to be moral we can get ourselves into a good karma stream.
- Then I **come to Christianity and discover** that here you have a God who is very personal, has a mind of his own, is righteously angry at sin, and has declared that man can't save himself by being good so he has to depend on God to do it for him.
- And I start to say, "**Well, these both can't be accurate pictures of God, and I think Christianity is right and Buddhism is wrong.**" How long do you think I would last as an elder at the Unitarian church?
- You say, "Well, maybe both are true in their own mystical, Obi-wan Kenobi kind of way."
  - Well, the problem when you say that is that you've **just told the Buddhist that his view that you can't interact with God as a person is wrong** (since you have the Christian over here interacting with him and you say that is valid.)
  - And, you have to tell the **Christian that his view that we're too sinful** to please God is wrong (since you're acknowledging the Buddhist over there who believes he is pleasing "god" through his good works.)
- **You're claiming that both of them have found a workable system**, but neither of them sees the whole picture of God... And how do you know that they don't see the whole picture of God? Evidently, you see it?
  - Kind of like the illustration: **Elephant. Mountain.**

- Me and Abdullah: we're friends. College kid who says, "You're both right." What you're saying is that you understand our faiths more than we do..."
- When Jesus came, **he claimed to be the full and complete revelation** the one true God.
  - Illus. **Man from the other side of the wall.** Is he or is he not who he says he is?
  - All of our division comes from that judgment.
  - **The Christian says,** "He's God; he gets to make the rules. Doesn't matter what I think, or you think, about this."
    - The world says, "I think I get to make the rules, too, so I'm going to "exclude" his claims to total Lordship.
  - The world says, "You Christians' views on sex are too narrow."
    - **We just believe Jesus gets to make the rules on all things, including sex.** The world has ways of determining what is right and wrong... they just don't like our ways, and so they exclude our ways of determining what is right.
    - **Romans 1 says** all our conflict comes from this question: is God in charge of all our lives, or are we in charge? Does he get to make the rules, or do we get to make the rules?
    - **Either claim excludes the others...**
  - **When I am talking to a person** who tells me that I am a narrow person... **I ASK:** is your problem with my interpretation of Jesus, or is your problem with Jesus himself?
    - That's a very important question. If with me, study it. The problem is that most people don't want anybody telling them... they want no authority in their lives.
- So, see, it is a myth that *Christianity is unusually exclusive*. Jesus question is, "Am I Lord or not?" If he is, he has total authority; if not, his claims to authority are invalid.

## II. A Staggering Claim

**37** "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." **Matthew 10:37**

- This statement is **staggering for 2 reasons:** First, **Jesus puts himself right at the center** of our faith. He doesn't say, "Love and obey God, but love and obey *me*."
- This makes Jesus unlike any other religious leader. Imagine if any other religious leader ever said that...
  - Imagine if *I* said that... (In some ways, **I'm your religious leader, right?**) "Summit, you have to love me, and be committed to me, more than anything else. If you don't love me more you're your husbands, your wives, your kids, you are not worthy of me..."
  - (If someone ever says that, you should **get up and leave**. Do not pass go. Do not collect 200. Get up and leave, because you can expect the Kool-Aid distribution soon.)
- Other great religious leaders in the world never said things that... **Mohammad** never said it. **Buddha** didn't say it. They all said, "Love and obey God."
- **Other great Christian leaders** deflected the attention off of them and onto God. **John the Baptist**, whom Jesus called "the greatest prophet ever to live," said, "God's name must increase, but I must decrease."
  - George Whitefield, one of the great leaders of America's *Great Awakening*, said, "*Let the name of Whitefield perish from the earth!*"
- **Jesus, by contrast, always wanted to talk about himself!** He didn't tell people to "love and follow God," but "love and follow *me*." And told people that unless they loved him more than their own kids that they couldn't follow him.
  - Which means, he's either the worst cult leader ever, or he was something different than every other religious leader: he's actually God. The object of faith.

- **Bart Ehrman, UNC–CH has a book out** in which he says that in Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus don't every really present Jesus as God (only in the Gospel of John does Jesus make the big "I am God" claims, and that one was written later.) But that claim overlooks claims like this one...
  - Matthew 5: "I say to you"
  - Forgave sins
  - Claimed he was the Temple
  - In the Gospel of Matthew and Luke the disciples worship him. Ehrman says that the Bible was written by Jesus' admirers; it was not written by his admirers, but by his worshippers.
  - Either Jesus really believed himself to be God, or he is the worst blasphemer ever to walk the face of the earth.
- **Why don't M, M, L record Jesus' straightforward claims** to divinity the way that John does? They are trying to bring in Jesus' divinity through the backdoor because of the audience to whom they are writing... But they are there.

So, this claim is staggering because Jesus is demanding to be the center of faith and affection... it is **also staggering because he is talking about a commitment that trumps** our most precious relationships; a commitment that can have no conditions.

"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." **Matthew 10:37**

Many people come to God for help with their family. And he will help. But they have to run a different second to him.

**Here's a question: Do you love Jesus more than your family?** If you ever had to choose between him, and them, what would you choose?

**Are you teaching your kids to obey Jesus more than you?**

- **I try to teach my kids**, it's not what I want from your life, but what God wants.
- The **Christian world is filled with parents** who don't want their kids to obey God... Mission field.
- Parents: Jesus says to your kids, "I am telling your kids to love me more than you... and if I tell them to do something you don't agree with, I want them to defy you... If I tell them to live in a part of the world you don't want, to obey me, not you."
- Does that make you mad? (Do you hate Jesus yet?)

**Are you teaching your kids to love Jesus more or you?**

- **Where are you directing their loyalty** and love? Is it first to you, or to him?
- **Where are you directing their priorities?** Look at your family schedule. Is it designed to center their lives and affections around him?

**I don't want any of this to imply that coming to Jesus gives you some kind of brazen, unloving attitude toward your family.** People who come to Jesus become better husbands and fathers and children because Jesus teaches us to lay down your lives for those people.

- **But for many of us, our kids, our families, are idols we put ahead even of God.** Your kids are good things that have become God things.
- You're basically just using Jesus to get good family, which is the ultimate thing for you. Jesus will not be used as a means to anything else.

### III. An Incredible Motivation

<sup>49</sup> "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! **Luke 12:49–50**

- Whenever God sent fire to earth, it brought judgment. **Exodus 19.**
- But, he says, I have a baptism to undergo first... his own baptism... of fire.

- You see, the problem is, if God's righteous wrath destroys all the wickedness, would any of us survive? *All we... For all have sinned...*
  - So, he suffered God's wrath in our place.
  - When Jesus died... Darkness. Earthquakes.
  - Tim Keller: "Jesus did not come to earth the first time to bring justice but rather to bear it. He came not with a sword in his hands but with nails through his hands. Christian teaching for centuries has been this: Jesus died on the cross in our place, taking the punishment our sins deserve, so that someday he can return to earth to end evil without destroying us all."
- You want a motivation to follow Jesus? That's it.
- See that phrase, <sup>50</sup>But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Constraints of what?
  - Remember what I told you about Gethsemane? *"My Son, here is the cup, smell it and see it. If you drink it, you will be utterly destroyed. But if you don't, they will perish... The Father wanted us to see Jesus go to the cross voluntarily knowing full well what he was about to experience, so that his love for us would be put on display even more."*  
**Jonathan Edwards**
- Linger there...
  - Illus. I was talking with some of our campus pastors this week about the first time we said, "I love you." Over dinner, you say it, and they say, "What time does the movie start?"
    - Todd: At the airport. Go to bathroom.
    - Me: I said it first over email. Refresh.
  - Jesus went all-in first. He invites you into a love relationship in which he's already gone all-in.
- **You see, if you're sitting around thinking about what a huge sacrifice it is to follow Jesus**, and it seems burdensome, you're probably not grasping the greatness of the treasure you have in Jesus...
  - (Me at my marriage with Veronica. Like a blur. Probably other girls that I had been interested in, maybe even a few

that I dated. I can't remember. I wasn't thinking: "I lost you... could have had you." I was thinking, "I gained you!"

Is there anything greater to gain than God? He is the God of all the universe... I was lost, he saved me.

### Linger there...

- **You'll never give up more** for him than he gave up for you. You'll never go farther for him than he went for you. You'll never suffer more for him than he did for you.
- **Dwell on that**, and this passage won't seem like a burden:

A new song we sing that expresses this perfectly...

And as I ran my hell-bound race, Indifferent to the cost  
You looked upon my helpless state, And led me to the cross.  
And I beheld God's love displayed, You suffered in my place  
You bore the wrath reserved for me, Now all I know is grace.

Now, Lord, I would be Yours alone, And live so all might see  
The strength to follow Your commands, Could never come from me.  
Oh Father, use my ransomed life, In any way You choose.  
And let my song forever be, My only boast is You.

*Hallelujah! All I have is Christ, Hallelujah! Jesus is my life!*

He's my life. All I have is Christ! All I need is Christ!

You see, in order really to give up your life to something, you have to trust the one you're giving it to...

- Ever invested money?
- Paul said, "I am suffering for him... but I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day." 2 Tim 1:12

*A lot of times people overseas have to make this actual decision:*

- One of our CP'ers from CA:

- A man came to Christ, family locked him a room, hung him upside down and beat him o get him to recant
- Had to flee the city because the mullahs were trying to put him into prison
- Came back, family locked him up again
- At college, brother came to live... but thought, “I think my father sent him here to kill me.”
- Even here:
  - Several people who ask me... my family won’t let me do this...
  - One campus pastor says the first and only time he took a swing at him...

But for many of us, we’ll never have that...

#### IV. 4 Practical Questions

##### A. Have I “owned” Jesus in all my relationships?

- Family
  - **What do you do when your parents refuse to let you follow?**
  - Wait until your parents consent. We ask people to do that until they are 18 for baptism. But of course you start following Jesus immediately.
  - People say, ‘Honor your father and mother’? How long? Honoring your parents often means becoming the person...
- Work
  - This may be increasingly so... some leaders at our Gospel and Work conference. Lost job; revenue: one because of integrity; another because of testimony.
- Friends: maintaining your confession **in the midst of withering criticism**. Saying things about you that just aren’t true.

##### B. Am I obeying him with what’s in front of me right now?

- It’s easy to talk about “total sacrifice,” most have throats slit. Am I obeying right now?
  - Community? Serving? Giving? Mission?
  - Baptized? (Encore week.) Can you really think about being serious in how you follow him if you haven’t done this?
- **Here’s another one:** Majority of Christian young people living together. Christian Mingle: singles aged 18 to 59 were asked, “Would you have sex before marriage?” 63% said yes.<sup>1</sup> What business do you have sitting through a sermon about dying for Jesus... and then singing a song about how worthy he is, when you won’t even obey him in a very clear thing he has said?
- **Or let me apply this one other way:** I know people who are very sincere in following Jesus... won’t rearrange life to come to church. For you, the immediate decision in following Jesus means simply prioritizing the things of God. **For you, following Jesus does not mean being burned at the stake yet, but it does mean re-arranging your work schedule.** *That’s the decision for you.*

##### C. Do I have any conditions for following Jesus?

- What do I insist he provide for me to follow him?
- I know many who have quit following because... of some pain or disappointment: I didn’t get this job, or maybe this bad thing happened. That was a condition that just revealed Christ wasn’t “all” to you, but a means to an end.

##### D. Where I am causing division, am I doing it like him?

- I told you at the beginning... a lot of Christians have no problem with this message. They are just divisive jerks.
- Think about how Jesus caused division:
  - **1 Peter 2:23, “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”**
- Here’s 3 ways Christians are divisive UNLIKE Christ:

<sup>1</sup> <http://pastors.com/sexual-atheism-christian-dating-data-reveals-deeper-spiritual-malaise/>



- **When they force it:** Jesus never did that. He would speak, warn, pray. But not force. Doesn't have to come up at every dinner conversation.
- **When we defend ourselves in anger:** Jesus didn't do that. He took our insults.
  - When I'm angry, that shows me it is personal.
- **Judging the person.** More on this next week, but judging someone is NOT telling them the truth about what Jesus says. It is when you dismiss in condemnation the person you disagree with. Jesus was very clear about our sin, but then brought us close.

#### Prayer: What do you need to do?

- The first step of owning Jesus is baptism...