

49 *“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!* 50 *“But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!* 51 *“Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; 52 for from now on five members in one household will be 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 daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”*

Thursday evening Pam and I were telling each other about what we had planned for the day on Friday and I told her I would be spending most of the day writing a sermon on Jesus words; 49 *“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!*

To which Pam said, *"There are eight hundred happy texts, did you know that?"* Extra points if you recognize the quote. Pollyanna Whittier, of course.

Perhaps we need to stop for a moment and talk about that. What would we consider to be a "happy" text? Well, if it's good for us, it's happy. God is love. That seems like a happy text, perhaps.

Or what about the angel's announcement to the shepherds in Bethlehem; 10 *And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 “And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger.” 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men..... with whom He is pleased.”*

World peace. Great joy. Good news. We love to send bits and pieces of some of those words to our friends at Christmas time.

But there's always that nagging qualifier, isn't there. Peace on earth. We like that part. That's a happy text. Especially these days when men are burning

down cities and killing one another. We could use some peace on earth, Jesus. And we want to have peace on this earth, now, the way it is.

We're not happy about that little spoiler, that qualifier that the angel added to his happy text that kind of spoils it for us. *And on earth peace among men..... with whom He is pleased*

There's always a catch in this book, right? He couldn't just say *And on earth peace among men..* and let it go at that. That's the happy text we're looking for.

Happy for who? Well, happy for this world. Happy for all the people who live on my block, in my town, in my state, in this country of ours, in this world. World peace. Justice for everyone. Safety and security and wellness for everyone. That would be a happy text.

Again, let's think about this. Every text is a happy text for someone, right. We read the headline in our little newspaper: Muckers pummel visiting team! And that's a happy text for our team. But not so happy for the team that came to try to win a game. Someone loses, someone wins.

So then, a happy text is happy because of perspective. Happy if we gain what we want. Unhappy if we lose. Somebody wins, somebody loses. The text is dependent upon your perspective.

49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"

Suppose you created a perfect world. Perfect in every way, perfect in harmony, perfect weather, perfect people, and that perfection shone upon you, glorified you as it's creator.

Then suppose someone stole that world, usurped that world that you ruled in perfection and peace, introduced sin and hate and harm, made it so it was so foul you had to sort of hold it at arms length.

Ruined your world, your creation, and did it in such a way that all the families that were generated from that original ruined family inherited their sinful natures. Every person born into that world is born into a rebellion against you, the perfect creator and rightful owner.

And then, let us suppose that you as creator and rightful owner devised a plan to regain that world and restore it to its proper order and glory. And again we'll suppose that in your perfection, you have a perfect love for the ruined peoples, all the families of all the nations, even though they're spoiled and reeling in hatred and rebellion against you, you love them.

Now let's suppose that at great personal cost, you devise a way to re-purchase that which is rightfully yours, a way to forgive their debt and rebellion. How can that be? How could that become a reality?

You're a perfect creator and your perfect righteousness demands that sin and rebellion against you must not go unpunished. You are perfect in your justice. To allow sin and rebellion is impossible for a just and righteous God.

So then, you send your own Son, to die in the place of the sinners, the rebellious lost families. That one act satisfies your perfect love for your created peoples, and it satisfies your perfect righteousness and justice. Your beloved Son dies in their place, and you give His perfect righteousness to the sinful rebellious people and you place their sin which must be punished upon Him.

You send your angels to announce the possibility of Peace on Earth.

Now in that scenario I just described, would you not expect a mass exodus of all sinful rebellious debt ridden miserable men out of Satan's kingdom and into God's.

God paid the debt for you. All you have to do is recognize the offer for what it is, freedom from your sin, freedom from the debt of offense of the rebellion

and hatred that you are guilty of towards your Creator. Freedom. Get out of jail free.

Any Monopoly players here. Remember the get out of jail free card. But you own all the best properties on the board, Boardwalk and Park Place and the three green ones, and the yellow ones and you have hotels on all of them, and actually sitting in jail is a safe place while your opponent keeps landing on your property and paying you extortion rent. So you don't use your get out of jail free card. You kind of like jail.

Perspective is everything when it comes to happy texts in this book. Is our text this morning a happy text or a harmful unhappy text? Again, perspective is everything.

If you are the Triune God who owns all of the heavens, the Most High God, Creator of everything, and you have purchased your creations freedom at immense cost, and the rebellious men on this earth thumb their collective noses at you and say, no thank you very much, we love our sin and we are happy to stay in prison with our current owner, the god of this world, Satan;

Then what Jesus says here in our text this morning becomes an incredibly happy text. Perspective, perspective, perspective.

49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"

Let's take a deeper look into understanding fire upon the earth as a happy text. In Romans chapter 8 we learn that the earth has been subjected to futility. What does that mean?

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free

from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Paul and his long sentences. For the creation was subjected to futility. *mataiotés* (mat-ah-yot'-ace) is the greek word in the original autograph.

The word means: vanity, emptiness and is translated variously;
Usage: vanity, emptiness, unreality, purposelessness, ineffectiveness, instability, frailty; false religion.

mataiotés (mat-ah-yot'-ace) (a noun) – aimlessness due to lacking purpose or any meaningful end; nonsense because transitory. The word encompasses wickedness because of vain thinking. Our think machines are broken and we wander in aimless darkness.

If you've ever read Pilgrim's Progress, and if you haven't you should, talk to me about which modern version to look for on line, you will recall that Christian and his companion Faithful walk into a town called Vanity Fair.

And that town is a picture of this world under the corrupt control of Satan. Every kind of evil is practiced in Vanity Fair and the towns people of that place take offense at Christian and Faithful, and ultimately they murder Faithful and Christian barely escapes with his life.

Now, if you don't believe me, that our world has been subjected to aimlessness and hopelessness guided in the dark by evil of every kind, please go home and turn on the news channel.

This world has been subjected to the futility of the evil operator. Satan is the god of this world. But listen again carefully to Paul's words. This world groans under the burden of the usurper Satan. It's waiting for deliverance.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20

For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

A day is coming when this world is going to go through a cleansing process. Evil is going to be cleansed from this world by fire. Jesus is coming to retake this world and return it to the glory of the creation before Satan messed it up and it was subjected to aimless evil futility under his control.

And Paul says, those of us who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we have been quickened from death to life, we have the Holy Spirit who made us alive together with Christ, living in us, we are waiting eagerly for this day. The earth will be restored from it's slavery to corruption.

You walk around up on Table mountain or some of the other incredibly beautiful and untouched places and you think to yourself, if this is what it looks like while it's groaning under the load of futility and sin of an evil usurper, what will it look like when Jesus returns and cleanses it with fire and restores it to it's proper glory!!?

So then, I submit to you, that our text this morning is NOT an unhappy text. If it seems that way to you;

49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!

then perhaps you need to take inventory and ask yourself which side of this warfare you are encamped in.

Paul says we aren't just glumly waiting for this day, we're like little kids waiting for christmas morning. We're gleeful in our anticipation for this day. This is the day when everything that was turned upside down by Satan gets turned back right side up! This is the day when our faith becomes sight!

We should read those words and shout for joy. 49 *"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!* And John says; ***Even so, Come Lord Jesus.***

This world is worried silly about temperature fluctuations. Greenhouse gasses may be raising the temperature a portion of 1 degree. Or not. It takes a lot of computer modeling of complete unknowns to arrive at that, and it's such a faulty conclusion that the guys who want it to be had to change the name from global warming to "climate change". That is vanity. Futility. Aimless emptiness.

Jesus is going to subject this world to fire. Real fire. You can take His words literally. 49 *"I have come to cast fire upon the earth;*

Or, the world is worried silly over a virus bug. We're so worried it was worth it to destroy our economy, to subject every business to a new plan where no one can possibly make a profit. Everyone must stay cooped up sheltering in place.

Until some cop unjustly kills another human being made in the image of God, a black man killed for no good reason by a white man, and everyone who has had just about enough of sheltering in place decides to have a giant block party and burn the businesses that could not longer be profitable down. Burn them down. That is vanity. Futility. Aimless emptiness.

And those are just some of the happier stories on the news. Darker things are going on behind closed doors. Much darker. Wholesale darkness and depravity and corruption.

And the world who hates God stands around and says, if He's real, why doesn't He do something?? Why doesn't He fix it! 49 *"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"*

Beloved, those words are very good news. The best news. But only for those who don't get burned up in the fire. And that's the rub, isn't it. Because I honestly love my neighbors. Next door, both of them, the folks across the street, even the guy who plays his music so loud I have to listen to it. I love them all, and while it's good news that Jesus is coming to take back this world and restore it to a glory we've not seen or imagined, my heart is sort of sick about all the folks I love whose ears are plugged and they will reject this news and be burnt up.

In Revelation chapter 10 we read: 8 *Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the small scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel standing on the sea and on the land."* 9 *And I went to the angel and said, "Give me the small scroll." "Take it and eat it," he said. "It will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."* 10 *So I took the small scroll from the angel's hand and ate it; and it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned bitter....*

These words of Jesus are both sweet and bitter. Sweet because we long for the day when He is glorified and victoriously retakes control of this world and restores it to the freedom of perfection and glory it was created for.

But they are also bitter. Because people that my heart loves are deaf and blind and persistent in their rejection of God's free gift. And fire is coming. Quickly.

So I understand my wife's little half joking, but half wishing for something joyful and positive when she quoted Pollyanna Whittier. We all wish for Pollyanna's world where everything is positive and everyone is happy. The trouble is, the road to that world is cataclismic. Satan is a worthy opponent. Restoration doesn't come without cataclismic events of judgement.

Beloved, the wrath of God is also that which brings Him glory that He is due. We always think of God's wrath as negative. Not so. It brings Him glory that belongs to Him. And anything that brings God glory, is a happy text.

Well, the introduction got longer than I thought it would. Thank you Pollyanna, and Pam. Let's set the scene again for the historic portion of a literal interpretative method.

Jesus has just informed the pharisee's that their religion is futile. Worthless. Unacceptable to God, and in so doing those same false religious system experts have begun to be incredibly hostile to Him. A hostility that will result in His death.

And so Jesus has moved outside to a giant crowd, 10,000 + people, so many they're stepping on each other to get a closer view of the Jesus show, and He has been preaching a sermon about coming out of this world, no matter what the cost, and coming into His world, His kingdom.

We've had a wonderful time covering so much depth of teaching in this chapter, and now Jesus is getting ready to wind this little talk up.

We talk with disdain about the old style fire and brimstone turn or burn preachers. They were for a different era that we're glad is gone, right. Except that is exactly what Jesus tells this crowd of thousands. Turn or burn people.

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You've got a choice to make folks, says Jesus. You can come out of this present futile lost dark world and follow me, at great cost, whatever it is, or you can stay and be burned up.

Sorry, that's what He just said. Fire is coming to burn up this world and cleanse it of evil, and how I wish it was already started! Exactly what He said.

But then He says, but not yet. Not yet.

49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

Jesus is longing for the victory to be in place. But that is still future, and the present is distressing. The baptism that He speaks of is the cross at Calvary. He longs for the day when evil is crushed and order and glory is returned to this world, but at the present He is in distress because of the price He must pay in order to purchase lost sinners out of this world and into the next glorious one.

The distress of the bearing of all the sin of the redeemed was weighing on Jesus the entire time He was here. He doesn't show it very often, does He. Once when He came down from the mount of transfiguration we get a little glimpse.

"O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." Mt. 17:17

Do you think Jesus liked coming from glory and walking around in Satan's world that is lost in futility and darkness. The creator of the universes walking around in a world that is in dis-array. Matthew reports; *36 When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* Mt. 9:36

It must have been heartbreaking for the God who created a perfect place to have to endure walking around in a broken place where His people are being ravaged like sheep with no shepherd to fight off the attacking animals.

There's nothing more pitifully helpless than a sheep that has no shepherd to protect it. We see images of the president or whoever, walking around in some spot that has just been destroyed by a hurricane, desolation, fear, confusion, loss. What was it like for Jesus to come to this world that has been

turned into a wilderness, a desolation by Satan and walk around in the mess that he has made.

Desolation everywhere He looks. Jesus walking around in a world that a spiritual tornado has left in broken shambles. Plus the knowledge that the day is approaching for Him to be nailed onto a cross and to bear reproach for innumerable sins that He did not commit.

Here is how Isaiah or I should say God Almighty through Isaiah describes the world that Satan has turned into a wreckage.

16 *“Those who see you will gaze at you,
They will ponder over you, saying,
‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,*

*17 Who made the world like a wilderness
And overthrew its cities,
Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’*

Satan has made God's perfect creation into a desolate wilderness. Wreckage on all sides. And Jesus is in that world, and He is distressed. Of course He wants the cleansing fires to come! But first He has an appointment on a cross so that He can purchase many of the lives that Satan has destroyed back.

And then Jesus looks beyond the cross to speak to His hearers about the cost of coming out of this world in futility and vanity and following Him. The whole sermon in Luke 12 has been talking about what that looks like. Leaving this world and its false religions and its lost culture behind and following Jesus. The entire sermon is looking at different aspects of that reality.

And finally He speaks about the divisiveness of that reality. We live in tightly knit mini cultures. Families. Those who dwell together in one house. And the transformation that Jesus has been talking about in this entire chapter is so

radical that in some instances family members will not be able to tolerate or associate with their own family members.

In that culture, and today in Arab cultures, a good picture to understand this, when someone leaves the darkness and void of Satan's world and comes into Jesus world, the change is so radical that it's like having soda and acid living in the same house.

Often it's outside pressures that make the inside pressures impossible. In the world of the Jews, following Jesus would get you unsynagogued. Thrown out of the synagogue, which was also becoming an outcast thrown out of the larger culture. It was against the law to be a christian. Bad things happen to your family when you have one or two christians living under the same roof with those who are still part of this world.

We saw that recently in Arab countries. If a christian is living under some roof, the house gets spray painted with words that tell the opposing factors, enemies of the state live here. Kill the people in this house. That kind of pressure turns families against each other.

51 "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;

Those are some of the most remarkable words in the entire Bible. They go directly against what the angel broadcast to the shepherds. Peace on earth, good will towards men. *51 "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division*

There will be peace. After the cleansing fires. After Satan is deposed as ruler and locked in a prison for 1000 years. After the rebellers and God haters are turned into ashes. When Christ reigns on David's throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years. Then there will be peace.

That's why the fire is a happy text. It brings in world peace. Order out of aimlessness. Light out of darkness. Paradise is regained.

But that isn't now. In Pilgrims progress when Christian and Faithful walk into the town of Vanity Fair, and the towns people ask them where they are going with such purpose and determination, and they explain to them that they are going to the celestial city, the dwellers in Vanity Fair take offense.

What's wrong with our city? Just the fact that Christian and Faithful are not willing to stay in Vanity Fair, must keep going to this better place, casts a discredit on Vanity Fair that angers those who dwell in that place.

How dare you say our city isn't good enough for you! Then they are beaten and Faithful dies from the injuries. Is that beginning to sound familiar? Bibles in hotel rooms cause offense. Bibles need a warning sticker that says this book is harmful. This book isn't "safe". Christianity and the old order of this nation for 250 years is everything that's wrong with this nation.

We can't wipe out the memory of christianity and it's effects fast enough.

Jesus, in this sermon, has talked from beginning to end about the cost of truly following Him. Leaving this world behind, and following Him NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.

And in His final words it gets really really expensive to be a Christ follower. Your family members will hate you and cast you out. Your community will hate you. Your culture will hate you. You will be like poison to be segregated away from the culture. Follow Jesus, become a leper. Follow Jesus, lose everything.

52 for from now on five members in one household will be 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 daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

In Jesus example, there is a generational split in this family. The three older

members are diametrically opposed to the two younger members. Fathers, mothers, and mother's in law are divided against son and daughter.

When you've got anarchists burning down houses that contain a single christian, all of a sudden, blood no longer matters. The christians have to go. It's heart breaking, but for some reason we can't see, these christians will hold onto their idiotic beliefs even unto death. So if burning houses down is what's going to happen, the christians have to go.

That happened already in Muslim countries. How long before it begins happening here? Are you ready if it comes here? Have you counted the cost ahead of time and tried to picture the most heart breaking costs imaginable in order to keep Jesus? It doesn't get much worse than breaking up families, in order to keep Jesus.

Warning: Literal Belief in this Book May Endanger Your Health and Life. So says the freedom from religion foundation and they put those stickers on Hotel Bibles. **Literal Belief in this Book May Endanger Your Health and Life**

What they don't know is that Jesus already told us that. Right here. Division. Hatred. Families split down the middle. This book is radically unsafe.

Jesus said; *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."* Jn. 16:33

It turns out Jesus does bring peace. In this world it's an inner peace, knowing Him, having the Holy Spirit dwell with you and in you, it's a peace this world can't touch. But even in that verse He reminds us, in this world that is still ruled by the god of this world, Satan, you *will* have tribulation.

Inner peace in outer chaos. And yes, it's totally unsafe. Possessing Jesus is totally unsafe. And getting more unsafe every day. In *this* world. But this world has a destiny with fire.

