

Message Summary

Could Jesus really be a divider? Last week, Pastor Deric led us in seeing the judgment that awaits those who are not ready at Christ's return (Lk. 12:35-48). In this difficult passage, Christ teaching that the deepest divisions on earth stem from our Savior Himself. True discipleship will not unify people, but tear them apart, even in the most fundamental social institution: the family.

Division forces the question of what is ultimate. Country, community, and family are certainly good gifts God has given us to enjoy and steward (Ps. 127; Pr. 18:22; Eph. 5:22-6:4). But whenever a good thing become ultimate, we worship that created thing (community, country, family, etc.) rather than God, the Creator. The Bible calls this idolatry (Ps. 115; Rm. 1:21-23). But if the truth of God is ultimate, it will necessarily bring division between those for whom God is ultimate and those for whom idols (which can even include good things!) are ultimate. Is family our greatest goal? If so, we will sacrifice true discipleship for the sake of keeping our families together. Is unifying our community our highest purpose? If so, we will forsake gospel evangelism for the sake of preserving our friendships. Biblical discipleship is either our ultimate priority, or nothing at all.

Division is great because the eternal punishment is great. The coming fire (v. 49) denotes the eternal, painful, horrific judgment of God, with which there is no middle ground (Mt. 12:30). Our question is whether we want to endure the flames of judgment ourselves, or come to Christ, who took our sin's judgment on Himself (v. 50). Though we divert attention from such eternal matters to trivial matters such as weather (vv. 54-56), our debt of sin is too great for us to bear ourselves. The Bible is about the story of our great Judge, who settled our eternal debt of sin by enduring its full wrath on our behalf (vv. 57-59). Why, then, would we refuse Christ's payment to pay our own debt? Jesus makes clear that He is the great divider. One question remains: On whose side will you be?

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why is it easy for us to make idols out of good things? What sorts of idols are advanced in our culture today?

Is there a good type of unity for which we should strive? How could Christ both command unity in the church on the one hand, and insist that he will bring division between the church and the world on the other hand? On what is true unity built? (See Ephesians 4:1-6)

Why is triviality such an easy escape mechanism from matters of eternal weight?

Pastor Deric stated that "If we focus ultimately on family, we will lose both family and God." How is this the case? Why do good things, when made ultimate, go bad on us?

Read together John 3:16-21. How does the fire of God's eternal judgment force the ultimacy of godly matters and not worldly matters? Why is hell so unpopular today?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family discussion.

1. How much time do you take to worship Christ, who took the wrath of God's eternal punishment against sin for us? What are some ways you can incorporate a more worshipful heart towards your Savior this week?
2. Are you more prone to meditate on trivial things such as weather instead of meditating deeply on God's eternal power? What priorities do your conversations reflect? How can you redirect your thoughts and conversation away from triviality and towards deeper matters? (See Col. 3:1-2; Jm. 4:14)
3. In what areas are you sacrificing true gospel discipleship and witness for idolatrous unity? In what areas are you destroying true unity with other disciples for selfish idols (1 Cor. 1:10)?
4. Is Christianity an add-on to what you really want in life? If so, what are those things you really want instead of God himself?
5. Are you tempted to see Jesus as a means to a "stress-free" life? How can you be more active in loving God and people well, even in ways that require greater stress and sacrifice? Are there any areas of loving God and others that you have been avoiding for the sake of a "stress-free" life?
6. What sorts of good gifts from God are you tempted to idolize? How can you turn them into tools for true Christian discipleship this week?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for taking all the wrath due to us on the cross, the Judge being judged in our place, so that we do not have to endure the eternal fire of God's judgment ourselves.
 - Pray that we would love the Creator more than the good things of His creation so easy to idolize. Pray that we would love the true unity of the gospel rather than the worldly unity that avoids necessary gospel division.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray for Eddie Nichols, Jacob Haynes, and the Dream Center, that God would bless the efforts to preach the divisive gospel boldly, that He would save many from eternal wrath through faith in Christ, and that he would bless the construction of the needed facilities for these purposes.
 - Pray that we would have boldness to speak the word of God without fear, even when it brings division
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for Muslims around the world (including here in Gadsden!) to love Christ more than Islam and their families. Look at imb.org for more specific ways to consistently pray for global Muslims.
 - Pray for Christians from Muslim backgrounds around the world, that the Lord would give them grace and strength to endure persecution from the divisive gospel and use their testimony to bring more to the worship of the true God