

10/25/2018 – Thursday – 29th Week in Ordinary Time

EPH 3: 14 – 21 LK 12: 49-53

The fire of God's purifying love and cleansing word

The image of fire in biblical times was often associated with God and with his action in the world and in the lives of his people. God sometimes manifested his presence by use of fire, such as God's revelation to Moses through the burning bush in the wilderness, which was not consumed by the flames (Exodus 3:2). God assured the Hebrew people of his continual presence, guidance, and protection for them through the wilderness for forty years with the pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day (Exodus 13:21-22). The prophet Elijah called down fire from heaven to reveal God's presence and power and to purify the people of false idols (1 Kings 18:36-39). The image of fire was also used as a sign of God's glory (Ezekiel 1:4, 13) and holiness (Deuteronomy 4:24), his protective presence (2 Kings 6:17), and his righteous judgment (Zechariah 13:9) and holy wrath against sin (Isaiah 66:15-16).

Fire is also a sign and symbol of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11-12 and Luke 3:16-17). When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples at Pentecost "tongues of fire" appeared above their heads (Acts 2:3). We can see from both the Old and New Testament Scriptures that God's fire purifies and cleanses to make us clean (sins washed away) and holy (fit to offer him acceptable praise and worship), and it inspires a reverent fear (awe in God's presence) and respect (obeying and giving God his due) for God and for his holy word.

Loyalty unites - division separates

Why did Jesus link fire from heaven with costly division on the earth? Did he expect his followers to take his statement of "father against son and son against father" and "mother against daughter and daughter against

mother" literally? Or was he intentionally using a figure of speech to emphasize the choice and cost of following him above all else? The essence of Christianity is loyalty to Jesus Christ - the Son of God and Savior of the world - a loyalty that takes precedence over every other relationship. The love of God compels us to choose who will be first in our lives. To place any relationship (or anything else) above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus insists that his disciples give him the loyalty, which is only due to God, a loyalty which is higher than spouse or kin. It is possible that family and friends can become our enemies if the thought of them keeps us from doing what we know God wants us to do. Does the love of Jesus Christ compel you to put God first in all you do (2 Corinthians 5:14)?

In our world today, there are Christians who are persecuted simply for being Christian. And in some cultures, Christians are severely mistreated for speaking out regarding certain moral truths of the faith. As a result, the proclamation of the Gospel can at times bring about a certain disunity.

However, the real cause of any disunity is the refusal on the part of some to accept the truth. Do not be afraid of holding fast to the truths of our faith regardless of the reactions of others. If you are hated or mistreated as a result, do not let yourself give in to compromise for the sake of "peace at all costs." That form of peace is not from God and will never bring about true unity in Christ.

Let Us Pray

"Lord Jesus, may the fire of your love consume me and transform my life that I may truly desire nothing more than life with you. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit that I may always seek to please you and do your will." **Jesus I Trust in You**