**8/17/25**

**Uncomfortable**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 12:49-56 (NRSVUE)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

I will admit it out loud, just like I admitted it out loud to our S’mores and Scripture Group last night… this Gospel Reading has had me super **uncomfortable** all week. I know that I am supposed to be up here talking about the law for certain, along with also delivering a gospel message of good news. Yes, we are to hear the bad and the good, and we are to be empowered to go back out there in the world and share the message. However, this Gospel Reading does not make that easy at all. I know that each and every one of us really is not struggling with seeing the law here at all. However, I know for certain that it is very hard for most of us to see the good news even the slightest bit. Although, I will reassure you, it is tucked right in there as perfectly as it was intended to be. We just have to look at things through a little different lens than we are used to. We eventually see that “Jesus reveals some of his intense desire here — desire for the world’s well-being.” (6) … and amen to that!

So, let me ask you some questions, and let me pose some comments to get you all thinking in a slightly different manner… You can even feel free to nod your head, to say ugh huh, or even shake your heads or say no if you wish as I share this list… Have you ever read scripture and been almost ready to tuck it back in where it came from just like this Gospel Reading today? Have you ever actually considered flipping the page quickly to get to another chapter or verse? Have you ever just thought about closing the Bible or the app on your device altogether and giving it a break for a while? Let alone… Have you ever got to the point when you are reading that you have said to yourself, or even out loud… Nope, that’s not for me today, and I am not sure that it ever will be… or… I really have nothing to do with this story, and I really don’t want to… or even… There is no way that this is true, and quite frankly I am not even sure what the person who wrote this was actually thinking! These thoughts, actions, and comments were all rather similar to how I felt as I started out this week on Monday and began my reading and research. They even extended throughout the week as I worked through this sermon. I will even admit that the text had me so **uncomfortable** with dealing with it that I typed almost an entire sermon discussing the topic, yet completely skirting around it. So, when I sat back down and took a crack at finishing it yesterday the Spirit moved me to dump the majority of what I had already typed and go back to the beginning. It was frustrating and if you can imagine it actually made me even more **uncomfortable** than I had already been. However, I came to realize that sometimes what I type on Monday is not what is meant to be delivered from the pulpit on Sunday.

Yes, sometimes we have the blessing and the curse of dealing with text that is **uncomfortable** to us. Sometimes we need to unwrap it in various layers and break it down and see what it really means. That honestly is the best part about our three-year lectionary cycle at times. We actually have a prescribed set of readings that we may never consider grappling with, and we can’t just skim right over. We are called to roll up our sleeves together and work on and understand these things in community, and not just simply on our own. So, I am glad this particular Gospel Reading came up today. I am glad that I got to dive in and research it more. I am also glad that I am right here with you all to explore it more for each and every one of us. So, thank you for your very presence in the pews and on the conference call this morning.

Believe it or not there are indeed messages kind of hidden within messages. There are even some things that we need to take in but yet out of context slightly to even be able to understand them to a better degree. So, we need to stretch our minds and understandings. We need to actually be comfortable with being a little **uncomfortable** for a brief moment in time. That is why I posed those questions and comments before. To get us on a similar page, but yet thinking alternatively as well.

Now I know that we all can admit that the concepts, the mindset, and even the approach here in our Gospel Reading from the twelfth chapter of Luke are not something we are very familiar with, or even picture Jesus acting like. Yes, we have heard the stories about him flipping tables and we have heard about Jesus’ frustration in other manners. However, we do not expect fire, division, or any kind of chaos to further ensue. We especially do not expect Jesus to be questioning our motives and mindset when we think that we have it all together either. However, that is precisely where this Gospel Reading has us this morning.

So, as I struggled to better understand things, and even put them into words that you or I could understand better, I realized that I could and should tag in some help and support. As a result, the first extremely valid point comes from Mat Skinner in his commentary from Working Preacher where he writes, “The fire Jesus wants to kindle is a fire of change, the fire of God’s active presence in the world. No wonder he is so eager to strike the match.” (6) Jesus is not looking to burn down everything in existence. I know we typically think of fire as consuming or destroying. However, Jesus flips our mindset upside down, just like those tables, and Jesus is expecting us to be constantly going through a refining fire. He strikes that match, or lights that fire in us so that we can grow and change in order to develop into better disciples.

Now, we come to the second commentary writer from Working Preacher that I am going to tag in for some help. David Lose’s words further add to this mindset and extend us onward to the second point here. He wrote, “Yet if we fear undergoing this baptism by fire, we might take comfort in the simple yet stark fact the Lord who comes to baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit first embraced his own baptism — experiencing harm that we might know healing, undergoing judgment that we might know pardon, suffering death that we might know life, both now and in the world to come.” (5) Yes, of course Jesus did the work, and He went to the cross for our redemption. There is no hidden action or statement there. Now, Jesus does not expect us to do the same thing, but we are indeed expected to pick up the cross and follow. To follow to the extent that our lives, minds, and hearts are really impacted and changed forever. We are further reminded that there is always work to be done, and it will be done by the Holy Spirit in and through us as we go out and show the very example of life as Jesus first showed us. We are not supposed to go out there and show that we are Christian, or to even identify with a certain faith practice. We are just simply to go out there and show love, plain and simple. We are to let God work in and through the minds and hearts of others, just like us, so that they may eventually come to faith, just like we did, and experience their very own baptism and renewal, just like we did, and experience all that our Triune God has to offer, just like we do every single day.

As we move on, we come to yet another **uncomfortable** point of our Gospel Reading where we deal with division. A kind of division that is even going to possibly happen within our own homes, or even in our most prized relationships. So, let me tag in another writer of a commentary on Working Preacher, and let’s listen to Jared E. Alcántara’s mindset here. He wrote, “Perhaps Jesus wants us to know the truth sooner rather than later—namely, that being his disciple may mean that things get worse in our families before they get better, if they get better at all. He is like a doctor who gives us a tough diagnosis after we get a disturbing test result. It is better for the doctor to tell the patient up front that things will be hard for the foreseeable future than to lie or be intentionally ambiguous with the truth. The truth is difficult to swallow, but we can take some comfort: Jesus says it will get better someday, even if not in our families.” (4) Unfortunately, some of our friends and family just will not agree with our religious convictions or our faith walk. They may not be receptive, or even desire to follow along with us at all. They may not even desire to come to a sort of agree to disagree stance, or a stance of compromise. They might be so upset or **uncomfortable** that they may not speak to us for some time, or ever again. Am I advocating or hoping for that? No! Has that happened in my very own life? Yes! However, please realize that when you become increasingly active in your faith and understanding it does often make some folks **uncomfortable**. That is okay of course, but don’t go out there picking any religious or faith fights, or go looking to create division. Keep growing and changing and allow God to intervene in your life, and the life of others. However, realize you do not always control the outcome.

My last point, or the last point of our Gospel Reading today, has yet again another point of being **uncomfortable**. We of course do not like being called names. We do not like being called fake, or pretenders, or actors. We especially do not want to be in the sandals of the people back then who were called hypocrites. However, that is precisely where we are as we close out this message here today. We are indeed put to the test. We are given some of the hardest work that we may have ever had. We are called to no longer look at that which is right in front of us and that which is so easy to see. We are called to not allow our vision to be clouded or blocked. We are called to look beyond and really see where Christ’s Kingdom is breaking into our very world each and every day. We are then called to go out there and magnify it so that others can see it as well. Jesus’ very ministry is present in and through each and every one of us, all we have to do is be a little **uncomfortable** at times and go show love, even in some of the hardest places or relationships, and as I said before, let God do the rest.

**Amen****.**

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

 Preaching

 Year C 2025

 August 17th, 2025

 10th Sunday after Pentecost

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus does not hold back when he speaks of fire and division on account of his

 coming

 August 17, 2025

 Commentary on Luke 12:49-56

 Jared E. Alcántara

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

 History is written backwards; sermons are written forward.

 August 15, 2010

 Commentary on Luke 12:49-56

 David Lose

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

 This passage offers a test for preachers — really for any Bible readers. What will we

 do with it?

 August 18, 2019

 Commentary on Luke 12:49-56

 Mat Skinner

**Luke 12:49-56 (NRSVUE)**

 Jesus delivers harsh words about the purifying and potentially divisive effects of

 obedience to God’s call. The way of the cross often leads followers to encounter

 hostility and rejection, even from those they love.

 [Jesus said:] 49 “I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were

 already ablaze! 50 I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what

 constraint I am under until it is completed! 51 Do you think that I have come to

 bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52 From now on five 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 her daughter-in-law

   and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

 54 He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you

 immediately say, ‘It is going to rain,’ and so it happens. 55 And when you see the

 south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens.

 56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky,

 but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”