

Division Isn't Just in Math Class

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Presence Litany adapted from 1 Chronicles 29**Pastor:** "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel**All: our father, forever and ever.****Pastor:** Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty,**All: for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.****Pastor:** Yours is the kingdom, O Lord,**All: and you are exalted as head above all.****Pastor:** We worship You Lord in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**All: Amen**

Jeremiah 23:23-29 ²³ "Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord. ²⁵ I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' ²⁶ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, ²⁷ who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? ²⁸ Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord. ²⁹ Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of

God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Luke 12:49-56 ⁴⁹ "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! ⁵¹ Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. ⁵² For from now on in one house there will be five 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 say at once, 'A shower is coming.' 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?

⁵⁷ "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸ As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. ⁵⁹ I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny."

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? (Luke 12:56)

We continue to walk with Luke in His remembrance of Jesus that so significantly impacted his life. The 12th chapter is an interesting one. It's certainly worth reading through again. It might take 8 minutes.

Jesus is talking with his disciples, but he is talking about the Pharisees. They had one job, help others hear God's voice. And the majority were lost and distracted - stuck in the spoils of the temple, or tourism, their own self-righteousness or the Greco-Roman culture... The Pharisees in the church then and today are stuck! - unable to hear or see that it was time to cut bait on those empty promises and false idols.

Jesus is here saying the same thing to us, His disciples today. Unlike the Pharisees, you do know how to interpret the present time, you do judge what is right. You know when to cut bait. The Holy Spirit is alive and well in you doing what the prophet of old spoke in 1978. You – *'know when to hold 'em, when to fold 'em, when to walk away, and when to run.'*

Like my son fishing with his friends. When he has cast his new spinner bait into a hidden stump under the water ... there comes a time where you have pulled and yanked in every direction possible ... it is time to cut bait. (or yank that one last time knowing the line will snap)

Like a Gardner who knows when it is no longer worth putting any time into the garden because the scorching heat of late summer is upon us ... you know when to cut bait.

Cut bait on what you might ask...

Well, in answer to that let me ask you: What do you think of when you think of division? Division isn't just a subject in Math class.

What comes to mind when God promises that with his presence in the world will come division. Not a punishment for us not getting life and boundaries right... Division is a simple consequence of the power with which God speaks. When

God's word is spoken in the public sphere or in the home people will be divided, it is in our nature.

What comes to your mind when you hear Jesus promise division?

The vast partisanship in our national politics... Identity politics, talking heads... the reality that social media is built on the premise of anger and division?? Our differences cannot and must not be celebrated, they must be fixed! (Or so the modern philosophy dictates) ... Modern day Experts, Elitism, Politics, and the tools we have given our youngest generation have poorly equipped us to deal with the reality of division. Thankfully Jesus can take over in the least likely of leader to deal with division in another way.

What comes to your mind when you hear Jesus promise division?



War? The reality that there are still land grabs coming from modern superpowers, Russia and Israel. Aren't we past that?? I know that the Bible promises that things will get worse in this physical world as it eventually diminishes. The Bible says there will be wars and rumors of wars before the new creation. But... I thought WW3 would look more like a cyber or guerrilla war, not a land war. ... It is in our nature to 'solve' division through violence and power grabs. Thankfully Jesus can take over in the least likely of leaders to deal with division in another way.

BUT culture war and actual war are not the division that Jesus is speaking to our hearts today. He is talking about your family.

When Jesus says your household will be divided right down the middle. When Jesus says Mother in laws and daughter in laws will not get along ... well actually I don't think that one surprises... right? We all can probably think of a time when a young husband went to Mom when he should have gone to his wife for some family or personal issue. Division. It is almost certain that Grandmas wisdom is going to humiliate the choices of a young wife at some point early in the marriage.

Let's be honest. We don't like the idea that God's presence in the home will cause division between parents and kids, but we know this to be true. Unless, the parents completely wrap themselves around the life of their children and are willing to spoil them in every way. The parents are going to lay down some type of rules against which the selfishness in every child will rebel. It is a good thing if those rules have been shaped by the commands and expectations of God revealed in the Bible. If the creator of the universe has taken the time to tell us how it works, it is worth our effort to listen.

However, make no mistake the fire that Jesus is wishing had already consumed the world, the sword of division, the hammer that breaks our relationships and our identity to pieces is not a set of rules to live by that the family needs to pass on... Make no mistake it is God's mercy that scares you most.

Let me get at this with an example. When a child has made a mistake. Say for example he has left Mom's \$300 bicycle at the edge of a corn field while taking a short cut to his friend's house And the bike ends up missing. The whole family takes part in searching for the bike. When the mother and son come in from the last search to tell the Dad and siblings that it cannot be found. There will be no peace until justice is served.

And if the mother seeing the repentance in her child's eyes and actions forgives the debt without a 2nd session or reprimands in front of the whole family and an agreed upon penance enacted... if that parent absolves the child. If that mother realizes there is nothing more the family can do to the child that he hasn't already done to himself to learn from this mistake... and lets him off the hook... The family will be divided.

And the division will not be - because some family members follow the rules and others do not. The profound unabating, often deeply buried division will come because someone got mercy.

We have seen this play out in the classroom, in the workplace and in our homes. In this diminishing world there will always be, Jesus says, those who are not ready for mercy. Mercy divides.

This is often the driving point of Jesus parables... the parable of the laborers in the vineyard all receiving the same wage (Matthew 20) and the last half of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:22).

When God and his word of Mercy become real in the presence of your family you will be divided.

And make no mistake this reality of Mercy brought about by the early church was the most partisan change the world has ever known. Families completely disowned each other over this seemingly new idea of Mercy. Some choosing the trendy new secular Greek laws and world view, some held on to the idea that we might just be able to get the laws of Moses right, ... but there was another group, the people of the way, who were caught up in this Holy Spirit movement that proclaimed connection to God not through our human works, but by God's merciful intervention.

And make no mistake the division between those who have a faith relationship with God and those still pursuing one of the many secular or ancient religions... that division is a fire that is slowly but surely consuming the world.

"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰ I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! – Luke 12:49

That fire was kindled in the world at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That fire was kindled for you, most assuredly, in the waters of your Baptism. You were Baptized like him, and you are, even now, resurrected like him. There is a part of you where Christ is present that will never die. And that part of you is becoming more and more of who you are everyday, with every Word from the mouth of God.

Jesus is here saying the same thing to us, His disciples today. Unlike the Pharisees, you do know how to interpret the present time, you do judge what is right. You know when to cut bait. The Holy Spirit is alive and well in you doing what the prophet of old spoke in 1978. You – *‘know when to hold ‘em, when to fold ‘em, when to walk away, and when to run.’* :)

The garden, the lure that you have invested so much in... it might be a relationship and if it is (You are not the only one God is using to shape that person’s life)...

The bait that you have cut, that was once so valuable to you – is your pride, your self-righteousness ... what ever it is that is keeping you from extending and welcoming Mercy to yourself or others. You need forgiveness, you want that forgiveness and you seek to forgive others as you have been forgiven.

Whatever mistake or brokenness or injustice that might rob your home of the Mercy of God no longer carries the weight it once did. It is forgiven!