

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Jeremiah 23:16-29

Concerning the prophets:

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. **17** They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’” **18** For who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened? **19** Behold, the storm of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. **20** The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly. **21** “I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. **22** But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.” **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?

23:16 *do not listen* – Cf 5:13. (TLSB)

visions. “Revelations” or “prophesies” (see 1Sa 3:1; Pr 29:18; Isa 1:1; Ob 1). (CSB)

Revelations of their own imagination. (Kretzmann)

from their own minds. See v. 26; 14:14. False prophets are like preachers of a “different gospel” (Gal 1:6–9). (CSB)

Their so-called messages to the people being made without authorization of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

23:17 *You will have peace.* The essential message of the false prophets (see 6:14 and note; 8:11; 14:13 and note; cf. 28:8–9). (CSB)

Irresponsible coddling of evildoers. (TLSB)

stubbornness of their hearts. See note on 3:17. (CSB)

A willful disobedience to the Lord's will. (Kretzmann)

no disaster shall come upon you – Proclaiming a security which the Lord had expressly denied them. (Kretzmann)

23:18 *council of the LORD*. God's heavenly confidants (see v. 22; Job 15:7–10; Job 1:6; 2:1; 29:4 and note; Ps 89:7). In Am 3:7 the Hebrew for "council" is translated "plan," the purposes that God has promised to reveal to his chosen servants (see v. 20). (CSB)

They did not associate with the Lord like the prophets to whom He entrusted the task of "revealing His secret" (Am 3:7). (TLSB)

paid attention to his word and listened – The prophet again denies that any of these false, self-appointed prophets can be mouthpieces of Jehovah. Jeremiah, on the contrary, now proclaims a word of the Lord which is entirely different in content from the inventions of the false prophets. (Kretzmann)

23:19–20 Repeated almost verbatim in 30:23–24. (CSB)

23:19 *storm ... whirling tempest*. A vivid image of God's wrath. (CSB)

Same threat is found in 30:23–24. (TLSB)

23:20 *anger of the Lord will not turn back* – Not cease from carrying out His judgment. (Kretzmann)

accomplished – everything that He had planned with regard to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. (Kretzmann)

latter days – At the time when His judgment would strike the people. (Kretzmann)

you will understand it clearly. Unlike the false prophets, who continued to mislead their hearers even in Babylonia after the exile of 597 B.C. (see 29:20–23). (CSB)

They will be fully aware of the truth of His threats. At the same time the Lord denies that He has in any way authorized the deceivers of His people. (Kretzmann)

23:21 *I did not send*. See v. 32; 29:9; contrast 1:7; Isa 6:8; Eze 3:5. (CSB)

They had not been commissioned as His messengers. (Kretzmann)

they ran – As messengers. (TLSB)

did not speak to them. Insisting that they possessed the prophetic spirit of the true God. (Kretzmann)

23:22 *my council*. In other words, they would preach repentance from idolatry instead of confirming the people in their false security, which has ever been a trick of such as falsely proclaimed themselves messengers of the Lord. To give weight to these reproofs, the Lord now shows why it is that He is familiar with the hypocritical conduct of the false prophets. (Kretzmann)

23:23 *God at hand... God far away*. God is both transcendent and immanent; he lives "in a high and holy place, but also with him who is ... lowly in spirit" (Isa 57:15). (CSB)

23:24 *hide ... so that I cannot see him*. See Job 26:6; Ps 139:7–12; Am 9:2–4. (CSB)

I fill heaven and earth. See Isa 66:1. (CSB)

Luther: “Now, if someone has Him who fills all things, he has more than the whole world. He has the real Fountain, not merely a spoonful, which is what the world would be in comparison with this Fountain. Even if God gives much—a kingdom, Persia, the papacy, an empire—it is still only a small leftover, a bit of bread, a spoonful, a mouthful. It is not the real Fountain but only a piece that He gives everyone and tosses up for scrambles. But when a man has Him who has more than He can give away, as the saying goes, then his heart knows that he has a gracious God and all things in Him. What could such a heart ever lack?” (AE 13:405–6). (TLSB)

Nothing being hidden from His omniscient gaze, from His omnipresence. With these attributes at His disposal, the Lord is naturally familiar with the acts and thoughts of all men everywhere. (Kretzmann)

23:25 *lies*. See 5:12. (CSB)

They offered the dross of their own imagination instead of the gold of God's Word. (Kretzmann)

dreamed.† God used dreams to reveal himself and to communicate with people (Ge 28:12–13; Nu 12:6; Mt 1:20; 2:12, 19), but the false prophets promulgate “false dreams” (v. 32), fabricated in “the delusions of their own minds” (v. 26). (CSB)

23:26 *heart ... heart*. The Hebrew is the same for both words. (CSB)

23:27 *my name*. To forget the Lord's name is tantamount to forgetting him. (CSB)

forgot my name for Baal. When Judah's ancestors forgot God, they began to serve Baal (see Jdg 3:7; 1Sa 12:9–10). (CSB)

Prophets who taught contrary to the doctrines revealed by God were to be branded impostors. (TLSB)

The Lord now sets forth the principle which is to guide those who claim for themselves the authority of His messengers. (Kretzmann)

23:28–29 The true word of God is symbolized in three figures of speech (grain, fire, hammer). (CSB)

23:28 *speak my name faithfully* – God works through His powerful Word. Corruption of His Word leads to confused teaching, hence the responsibility of godly teachers is great. (TLSB)

straw ... wheat. Of the two, only grain can feed and nourish (see note on 15:16). (CSB)

Contrast between the less useful straw and the precious, life-giving Word of God that nourishes faith. (TLSB)

The dreams of the false prophets are chaff, empty straw; God's Word, alone is the grain, the real substance. And still more the Lord asserts in characterizing His Word, the only message that has the right to be proclaimed as the eternal truth. (Kretzmann)

23:29 *like fire*. The fire of the divine word ultimately tests “the quality of each man's work” (1Co 3:13). (CSB)

Devouring and destroying all the philosophy of men which will not stand the test of His eternal truth. (Kretzmann)

This is God's thunderbolt. By the Law He strikes down both obvious sinners and false saints. He declares no one to be in the right, but drives them all together to terror and despair. This is the hammer... This is not active contrition or manufactured repentance. It is passive contrition, true sorrow of heart, suffering, and the sensation of death" (SA III III 2). (TLSB)

like a hammer. Similarly, the divine word works relentlessly, like a sword or hammer, to judge "the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb 4:12). (CSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 11:17-31, 12:1-3

By Faith

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. 20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. 21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. 29 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

11:17 *only son.* See Ge 22:2, 12, 16; Jn 3:16; Ro 8:32. (CSB)

What God asked him must have seemed not only incredible, but completely contrary to all that God had promised. (PBC)

11:18 *your offspring* – From Isaac would come not only physical Israel, but spiritual Israel, composed of all true believers in Christ, Abraham's greatest seed. To sacrifice Isaac seemed to mean canceling the fulfillment of that glorious promise. (PBC)

God promised descendants through Isaac. (TLSB)

11:19 *even to raise him from the dead.* So strong was Abraham's faith that he actually believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead if necessary, an event that did occur figuratively when the substitute ram was provided (Ge 22:13). (CSB)

he did receive him back. John Chrysostom: "By means of the ram [Abraham] received him again, having slain it in his stead. But these things were types: for here it is the Son of God who is slain" (NPNF 1 14:478). (TLSB)

11:20 Isaac, blind and aged, could not see which son was kneeling before him, but with the eyes of faith he could see what the future held for each of them. (PBC)

11:21 Jacob in his early days had leaned too heavily on his own resources and skill, but on his deathbed he leaned on his staff in worshipful trust in God's faithfulness. (PBC)

11:22 See Ge 50:24–25. Jacob (v. 21) and Joseph are additional examples of those whose faith is no less strong at death than in life (v. 13). (CSB)

Joseph, though he could have had his body impressively preserved in some Egyptian pyramid, looked ahead with eyes of faith through the mist of 400 years to Canaan. (PBC)

11:23–29 See Ac 7:20–44. (CSB)

11:23 *Moses' parents.* See Ex 6:20; Nu 26:58–59. (CSB)

not afraid of the king's edict. They feared God more than the evil king. Cf Ex 1:17, 21. (TLSB)

Joy at their baby's birth must have been dampened by concern when they saw it was a boy. Anxiety must have shadowed everyday of those three months as they struggled to keep quiet and secret a growing baby boy. But they did it – "by faith." (PBC)

the king's edict. To kill all Israelite males at birth (Ex 1:16, 22). (CSB)

11:24 MOSES...REFUSED – It says, he said no to the elite position and exalted privileges he had as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith he did this, knowing what his decision would cost him. Deliberately he shook off the position of royal blood and chose identification with the [people of God]. (PBC)

11:25 *pleasures of sin.* The luxury and prestige in Egypt's royal palace. (CSB)

From his decision came mistreatment; what the people of God were going through fell on him. For Moses to remain in Pharaoh's court even after knowing that God had called him to rescue Israel would have been sin. Sin's pleasures are only for a short time when compared to what God has in store for his people. (PBC)

11:26 *Christ.* Although Moses' understanding of the details of the Messianic hope was extremely limited, he chose to be associated with the people through whom that hope was to be realized. (CSB)

The Israelites suffered in Egypt because they hoped in the Messiah. (TLSB)

treasures of Egypt. The priceless treasures of King Tutankhamun's tomb alone included several thousand pounds of pure gold. (CSB)

11:27 *By faith he left Egypt.* Probably referring to his flight to Midian in the Sinai peninsula when he was 40 years old (Ex 2:11–15; Ac 7:23–29). (CSB)

not being afraid of the anger of the king. Exodus indicates that Moses was afraid (Ex 2:14) but does not expressly say of whom. And it tells us that he fled from Pharaoh when Pharaoh tried to kill him (Ex 2:15) but does not expressly say that he fled out of fear. The author of Hebrews capitalizes on these features of the account to highlight the fact that, in his fleeing from Pharaoh, Moses was sustained by his trust in God that the liberation of Israel would come and that he would have some part in it. (CSB)

Though at first afraid (Ex 2:14), Moses fled in faith from Egypt, intending to return when the time was right. (TLSB)

he endured. For 40 years in Midian (Ac 7:30). (CSB)

11:28 *Passover.* Gk *pascha*. Cf 1Co 5:7. (TLSB)

sprinkled. Or, “poured.” (TLSB)

11:29 See Ex 14–15. The third and final 40-year period of Moses’ life was spent leading the Israelites through the desert. At the age of 120 years he died in Moab (Dt 34:1–7). (CSB)

11:30 Moses’ place as leader was taken by Joshua, who brought the people of Israel into the land of promise. (CSB)

Jericho. The first great obstacle to their conquest of the land was captured by faith without a battle (Jos 6). (CSB)

11:31 *the prostitute Rahab.* A designation describing her way of life prior to her newly found faith (Jos 2:8–11; 6:22–25); also a testimony to God’s boundless grace that can reach down and redeem and raise any sinner to eternal dignity. (CSB)

God will judge the sexually immoral (13:4), yet God changed Rahab through repentance, faith, and action. (TLSB)

Jesus, Founder and Perfecter of Our Faith

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.

12:1 *since we are surrounded by so a cloud of witnesses.* The imagery suggests an athletic contest in a great amphitheater. The witnesses are the heroes of the past who have just been mentioned (ch. 11). They are not spectators but inspiring examples. The Greek word translated “witnesses” is the origin of the English word “martyr” and means “testifiers, witnesses.” They bear testimony to the power of faith and to God’s faithfulness. (CSB)

The many saints (ch 11) show that we are not alone in the struggle to confess Christ. Like a cloud, the saints’ examples are visible, though we cannot touch those who went before us. Cf Mt 17:1–5. *witnesses.* Gk *martys*, from which “martyr” comes. God commended those who bore witness to their faith, and they are examples of right faith and good works. (TLSB)

Like a massive cloud those OT heroes of faith surround the readers, giving vivid example of the endurance and eventual triumph of faith. “Don’t give up!” those heroes would shout from the pages of Holy Scripture, “Keep on running? You’re on the right track!” (PBC)

The phrase *kai hēmei* is emphatic: “We, too, on our part.” It places us beside all the glorious believers mentioned in chapter 11. Our faith, our strength, our conflict, and our crown is the same as theirs. Their past life still speaks to us about what faith really is. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The verbal adjective *heuperistato* does not occur elsewhere in Greek literature, and the exact meaning is uncertain. The most likely meaning is “easily ensnaring,” but “dangerous” is also possible. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The “great cloud of witnesses” refers to the many great persons of faith enumerated in chapter eleven: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. You may wish to cite a Biblical story illustrating how one or more of these persons fixed their eyes on the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The first three words of this verse range us along side of the OT believers mentioned in chapter 11. Even the believers in the OT are a countless host. They are witnesses in the sense that they are examples to us of faith and endurance. They surround us. God has placed them all about us in our thinking to encourage us. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

lay aside..hinders – Paul is using the metaphor of a runner. Runners must put off every encumbrance. *kai* is plainly expegetical. Illustration becomes application. *euperistaton* occurs only here in NT. It is variously rendered “which so easily besets us, which clings so closely, which holds on to us so tightly, which we easily fall into, that so readily entangles our feet.” Don’t limit this to besetting sin. It denotes the flesh, the old Adam. Read Romans 7. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Believers here still have sin clinging closely. Though justified, we are also sinners until we reach heaven. (TLSB)

A runner in a race naturally wants to carry no excess weight and tries hard to avoid obstacles that would trip him. Sin will hamper us in the race of life unless we confess it and resist it. Giving in to sin will make us stumble. The present subjunctive of *trevev* implies that the readers have been running and still are now. It may be translated “let us keep on running.” Perseverance (*hupomonē*) connotes holding out under a severe strain. The runners are not to let down under the strain, to slow up, or even to stop for any reason. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

run with endurance. See Ac 20:24; 1Co 9:24–26; Gal 2:2; 5:7; Php 2:16; 2Ti 4:7. The Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race rather than a short sprint. Some Hebrew Christians were tempted to drop out of the contest because of persecution. (CSB)

The Christian life, as a long-distance race, demands staying on the path and finishing. Cf 2Tm 4:7. Luther: “Therefore sin remains in the spiritual man for the exercise of grace, for the humbling of pride, for the repression of presumptuousness.... Only to those who manfully struggle and fight against their faults, invoking the grace of God, does God not impute sin. Therefore he who comes to confession should not think that he is laying down his burden so that he may lead a quiet life, but he should know that by putting down his burden he fights as a soldier of God and thus takes on another burden for God in opposition to the devil and to his own personal faults” (AE 25:339). (TLSB)

Running a race is strenuous work. The writer calls it *agona* which denotes strenuous conflict. We are told that it is laid before us. God has placed a mighty host around us and has laid the strenuous race before us. God encourages Christians through their mutual and reciprocal encouragement. On this verse Guthrie says: “These witness bear witness to the faithfulness of God in sustaining the.” Bengel identifies sin here with unbelief. Lenski: “their past life and their death still speak to us about what faith really is.” Bruce: “it is not so much they who look at us as we look to them – for encouragement.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

“Don’t give up!” those heroes would shout from the pages of Holy Scriptures, “Keep on running! You’re on the right track!” (PBC)

12:2 *looking to Jesus*. Just as a runner concentrates on the finish line, we should concentrate on Jesus, the goal and objective of our faith (Php 3:13–14). (CSB)

We do this by looking exclusively to Jesus. The word means to rivet one’s attention on one person or thing. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The participle *aforōnte* introduces the motive for running with unfaltering perseverance. It may be translated “ever looking away (durative present) to the author and perfecter of our faith.” Along the way, we may see many things that could dishearten us or even bring us to a halt. But by always fixing our eyes on Jesus, our speed will increase and our stamina will grow. Christ is the source of our faith, and he sustains it through the Word and Sacraments, and leads us to the heavenly goal of our faith. All along the way he is the object of our faith. Rom 1:17 says, “In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last” (NIV; NIV note: “from faith to faith”; RSV: “through faith for faith”). The faith was defined in 11:1, so it is specific: “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The competition in the race is not between believers. Rather, each believer struggles against his or her sinful nature and against the snares of sin met along the course. In addition, the believer struggles to pursue by faith the things hoped for, which are not seen. There is a competition between the allure of the visible things of this world, and the blessings of Christ and riches of heaven which are perceived only by faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

The author uses the present tense in the Greek to remind us to keep fixing our eyes on Jesus. (PBC)

founder. Jesus opened the way to salvation, and His new covenant will never be superseded. He creates our faith through the Gospel and Sacraments, and His Spirit brings us to the consummation of our salvation. (TLSB)

Westcott notes that Chrysostom said of the word archagon: “He Himself placed faith in us. He Himself gave the power.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

He’s the one who authors, continues and brings our faith to perfection in heaven. From A to Z He is both the object and the cause of our faith, giving us something to believe and the faith to do so. (PBC)

perfecter of our faith. Our faith, which has its beginning in him, is also completed in him; he is both the start and the end of the race. He is also the supreme witness who has already run the race and overcome. (CSB)

Beck renders it: “who gives us our faith from start to finish.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

joy set before him. His accomplishing our eternal redemption and his glorification at the Father’s “right hand” (see note on 1:3; cf. Isa 53:10–12). (CSB)

The joy of bringing others to heavenly glory by way of the cross. (TLSB)

endured the cross. See Php 2:5–8. (CSB)

despising the shame. As with Christ, the humiliation of our present suffering for the gospel's sake is far outweighed by the prospect of future glory (see 11:26; Mt 5:10–12; Ro 8:18; 2Co 4:17; 1Pe 4:13; 5:1, 10). (CSB)

Christ was not afraid to redeem us, despite the humiliation He experienced. (TLSB)

Guthrie remarks: “An attitude which does not ignore the shame, but holds it to be of no consequence in view of the joy.” Bruce: “This disgrace Jesus disregarded, as something not worthy to be taken into account when it was a question of His obedience to the will of God.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

seated at the right hand of the throne of God – The point here is that His suffering came to an end, He was victorious and now reigns forever. That should hearten us in our daily battles with sin as we run the race. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Christ, the object of our faith, is our role model since he has already finished the race. He is the one “who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The “joy set before him” is the glorification that followed his sufferings, his kingship over all believers, and the joy of redeeming fallen humanity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 4)

12:1–2 The Christian life is an endurance race, run with remembrance of the saints who have already finished. But most of all, we look to Jesus and His cross. In Him, our race is already won. • Lord Jesus, save me from my sin, which clings so closely, and give me endurance to do Your will. Amen. (TLSB)

Do Not Grow Weary

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

12:3 *Consider him.* He suffered infinitely more than any of his disciples is asked to suffer—a great encouragement for us when we are weary and tempted to become discouraged. (CSB)

We are to look Him over well and check Him from all sides. When feet fell like lead and we think we can't run another step, when hearts are as heavy as our legs and souls are ready to give up, then it's time to consider Jesus. (PBC)

sinners. Leaders and crowds in Jerusalem who opposed Jesus. (TLSB)

not grow weary. See Isa 40:28–31. (CSB)

From Him comes not only an example of how to run, but power for faith to pick up the pace and lengthen the stride on the track to heaven. (PBC)

It is a picture of an athlete relaxing before his goal is reached. That is a pitiful sight. We dare not give up. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

GOSPEL –Luke 12: 49-53

Not Peace but Division

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.”

12:49 *fire*. Applied figuratively in different ways in the NT. Here it is associated with judgment (v. 49) and division (v. 51). Judgment falls on the wicked, who are separated from the righteous. (CSB)

Proclamation of the judgment (cf 3:9; 9:5; 10:13–15). (TLSB)

Jesus longs to reveal the Kingdom, not only through judgment, but also and esp through the revelation of His grace and the deliverance it brings about. (TLSB)

εἰ ... ἀνήφθη—εἰ with an augmented indicative poses a contrary-to-fact condition. Not yet is it the hour for the fire to be kindled. (CC p. 520)

Jesus continues to explain to his disciples-apostles the foundation for their leadership as stewards of the mysteries and why hypocrisy and the love of possessions are dangerous distractions from waiting for the coming of the Son of Man. Their watchful service will be during a time of division. But the patient perseverance required of them and the anguish they may endure are put in proper perspective by the immeasurably greater anguish and perseverance of their Lord himself (12:49–50). Those who have been baptized into Christ undergo death and resurrection with him (Rom 6:1–4; Col 2:11–13). Thus the hostility they may suffer is a consequence of their baptismal incorporation into Christ (cf. Jn 15:18–25). (CC p. 521)

“Fire” recalls John’s preaching and baptism, where fire refers to God’s wrath and eschatological judgment (3:9, 17; cf. 9:54; 17:29; 22:55). John’s baptism is preparation for the coming of God’s kingdom in Jesus, which entails the pouring forth of God’s eschatological wrath on the earth. Already with John’s baptism, the world is asking, “When and on whom will this eschatological wrath be poured?” Jesus, in his baptism (3:21), in his Nazareth sermon (4:16–21), and in his response to John’s disciples about his Messiahship (7:18–23), shows that he comes in solidarity with fallen humankind, bearing in himself the wrath of God against sin. The fire of God’s eschatological wrath, then, is to be poured out first and foremost on Jesus, the one who comes in solidarity with sinful humanity and in substitution for it (22:37). (CC p. 522)

Fire can either *destroy* or it can *purify*. The fire of God’s wrath laid on Jesus will lead to his death and will destroy the power of sin and hell. This fire is first laid on Jesus when he enters the waters of his baptism by John. From his baptism, Jesus stands under the Father’s wrath and continues to stand under the Father’s wrath until that wrath is satiated in his crucifixion. With every sickness Jesus heals, every sin he forgives, every dead person he raises, Jesus is both releasing creation from its bondage and absorbing into his body all sickness, sin, and death. This is how he puts himself in the position to receive God’s wrath against sin. From the moment he steps forward publicly in his baptism as the world’s Messiah, this process begins. For this he came. Jesus knows that he is to bear this fiery wrath and eschatological judgment, and his passionate plea (12:50b) expresses his wish that it were already accomplished. Jesus knows that the fullness of God’s wrath is yet to fall on him, and he yearns that his substitutionary atonement on the cross would come soon (12:49). (CC p. 522)

The lake of fire in Rev 20:10, 14–15 suggests a connection between the eschatological wrath of God, which Jesus suffered on the cross, and a kind of “baptism by immersion.” On the cross,

Jesus is thrown into that lake of fire on our behalf; thus he underwent a “baptism by fire” on our behalf. When we are baptized into him, we are baptized into his death and resurrection (Rom 6:1–4; Col 2:11–13), so we too experience this fire. We endure the fire of God’s eschatological wrath as destructive in our death to sin, and we are purified by the holy fire of rebirth through the Spirit. See further the excursus “Baptism in Luke-Acts.” (CC p. 522)

12:50 baptism. The suffering that Jesus was to endure on the cross (see note on Mk 10:38). (CSB)

Figurative way of referring to the cross. (TLSB)

For the early catechumenate, Jesus’ baptism in water and his “baptism” in the shedding of his blood show how Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are related.

God’s wrath poured upon Jesus resulted in his bleeding and so caused his blood to wash down his body. A similar bloody washing occurred when “the blood of the covenant” was sprinkled on the people by Moses (Ex 24:8). Isaiah describes the Messiah as one who “will sprinkle many nations” (Is 52:15). In the OT there is a connection between the blood shed in sacrifice and the application of this blood by sprinkling as a kind of washing of the people. After sprinkling the people with “the blood of the covenant,” Moses and the elders miraculously eat and drink in God’s presence on the mountain (Ex 24:9–11). The very blood that cleanses in baptism—the blood applied through water and the Word by the Spirit—is also the cup of the new covenant in Jesus’ blood “which is being poured out on behalf of you” (Lk 22:20; cf. Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5–6; and Rev 7:14; 22:14 in light of Gal 3:27).

There are other OT themes that point toward a fiery “baptism” in Jesus’ blood. The red heifer combines the motifs of sacrifice by fire and washing (Numbers 19). This is a unique sacrifice different from the regular sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus. The red heifer is slaughtered outside the camp, just as Jesus is crucified outside Jerusalem. The blood of the heifer is sprinkled in the tabernacle, just as Jesus’ blood sprinkles many nations (Is 52:15). The red heifer, together with cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool, is burned as a holocaust. The ashes from this burnt offering are mixed with water to make the water mixture used for cleansing various kinds of uncleanness caused by death. The cleansing waters allow unclean people to be reincorporated and regathered into the people of God.

Circumcision, a bloody ritual that incorporated one into the covenant people, rendered one clean (cf. Ex 4:24–26—“bridegroom of blood”). Baptism, the NT counterpart of circumcision, is a washing that incorporates into the new covenant (Col 2:11–13). Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is the atonement that makes the cleansing waters of Baptism efficacious, and the benefits of his sacrifice are offered the communicant in the Supper (1 Cor 10:16–17). (CC p. 523)

Both are rooted in Christ’s ministry as humanity’s substitute. Jesus “came by water and blood” (1 Jn 5:6) as he identified with sinful humanity both in his baptism in the Jordan and in his table fellowship, especially at the Last Supper. Christian Baptism and the Lord’s Supper both flow from Christ’s atonement. Jesus appeased the Father’s fiery wrath both by his perfect life of obedience, attested by the Father’s approval voiced at his baptism (Lk 3:22), and by his suffering on the cross. The public messianic ministry into which Jesus was baptized and his passion are both completed at his death, when both water and blood flowed from his side—a fact of great significance for John the evangelist (Jn 19:34–37).

Augustine, for example, interprets the water and blood as representing the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, by which the church is created and sustained. Augustine even compares the formation of the church through the water and the blood from Christ’s side to the formation of

Eve out of the rib from Adam’s side, since Jesus is the second Adam. See Augustine, “Homilies on the Gospel of John,” IX, 10, and XV, 8, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 67, 101. (CC p. 524)

my distress – Verb implies being torn between two emotions. On the one hand, Jesus can not but dread His impending death on the cross. On the other, there is glory for Him and all humankind beyond the grave, thus His eager expectation. (TLSB)

συνέχομαι—Luke uses this word more often than other NT authors. (Lk 4:38; 8:37, 45; 12:50; 19:43; 22:63; Acts 7:57; 18:5; 28:8; the other NT occurrences: Mt 4:24; 2 Cor 5:14; Phil 1:23) H. Köster translates: “How I am totally governed by this” to reflect Jesus’ sense of inexorable movement toward the cross. (CC p. 520)

Thus, in speaking of both the fire Jesus came to cast and the baptism with which he must be baptized, Jesus speaks of his destiny in Jerusalem: “And how I am in distress until it is accomplished” (12:50). Here are echoes of his first two passion predictions (9:22, 44) and the programmatic sayings in 9:51 and 13:22–23. But there is also a hint of Jesus’ prayer to the Father on the Mount of Olives, where he shows his distress over his imminent suffering: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but may yours happen” (22:42). Already in Gethsemane, Jesus’ shedding of blood begins when “in agony, he prayed very fervently; and his sweat became as drops of blood falling down on the earth” (22:44). Jesus knows the outcome of his journey’s end and the horror that awaits him in Jerusalem. Like the whole burnt offering or holocaust (עֹלָה) so frequent in the OT, Jesus is to be offered up for the sin of world as the fire of the Father’s wrath is laid on him. (CC p. 524)

until it is accomplished. The words from the cross would pronounce the completion (Jn 19:28, 30). Jesus wished that the hour of suffering were already past. (CSB)

τελεσθῆ—This is another theological passive; God is the agent who will cause Jesus’ baptism to be “accomplished.” See comments at 13:32. (CC p. 520)

12:51 *do not think* – Although the disciples probably expected opposition—even violent opposition—they anticipated a military victory and subsequent political peace during the Messiah’s reign. Jesus would indeed bring about a kingdom of peace, but not the earthly kind His followers envisioned. (TLSB)

peace – εἰρήνην—This is emphatic by position as the first word in the indirect discourse. (CC p. 520)

The presence of the Father’s wrath upon Jesus brings a result that the disciples would not have anticipated. This fire and baptism do not lead to peace in worldly life but to division. For fire cast *on the earth* (ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν; 12:49) parallels peace (not) given *on the earth* (ἐν τῇ γῆ; 12:51) because the baptism Jesus must be baptized with brings division. For the hearer, this seems ironic because peace is what Jesus was supposed to bring, as Zechariah (1:79), the angels (2:14; ἐπι γῆς εἰρήνη), and Simeon announced in the infancy narrative (2:29). Jesus brings peace to sinners and the sick throughout his ministry (7:50; 8:48), and the seventy (-two) disciples continue to herald his peace when they announce it from house to house as they heal and proclaim the kingdom of God (10:5–6). As Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowds sing, “Blessed the Coming One, the King, in the name of the Lord! In heaven peace, and glory in the highest!” (19:38). But Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem because her people did not know “the things that have to do with peace” (19:42). After the resurrection, Jesus’ first words to the Eleven gathered in the upper room are “Peace to you” (24:36). (CC p. 524)

division. There is no middle ground with respect to Jesus and His rule. A person stands either with Him or against Him. (TLSB)

How does one reconcile Jesus the peace-bearer with Jesus the divider? Jesus does bring peace on earth for those who are members of his kingdom and who receive his heralds of peace in faith. This peace between God and humanity is made possible because God's wrath against humanity has been placed on Jesus. But the means for administering this peace—a watery baptism, a baptism into death—will cause division and conflict among people. The theology of the cross brings peace with God and absolves those who are marked with the cross in Baptism (1 Pet 3:21–22), but the cross also brings enmity from the world. (CC p. 525)

How does one reconcile Jesus the peace-bearer with Jesus the divider? Jesus does bring peace on earth for those who are members of his kingdom and who receive his heralds of peace in faith. This peace between God and humanity is made possible because God's wrath against humanity has been placed on Jesus. But the means for administering this peace—a watery baptism, a baptism into death—will cause division and conflict among people. The theology of the cross brings peace with God and absolves those who are marked with the cross in Baptism (1 Pet 3:21–22), but the cross also brings enmity from the world. (CC p. 525)

The hearer knows that Luke's gospel contains other references to Jesus as one who brings division. Jesus will cause the downfall of some, the resurrection of others, and the thoughts of many hearts among the families of Israel will be revealed when God's eschatological wrath is laid on him (2:29–35). Jesus' entire ministry has been one in which division has occurred, particularly between those in the Jewish religious establishment which rejects his teaching and the sinners and tax collectors who receive him in faith (7:29–30). The parable of the vineyard (20:9–19) highlights that rejection. Those who would follow him may have to forsake their family ties (9:59–62). Jesus reiterates that forcefully in 12:51–53. (CC p. 525)

12:52 *from now* – ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν—“From now on” includes Jesus' ministry. (CC p. 520)

Families would be deeply divided over what to make of Jesus. (TLSB)

divided – ἕσονται ... διαμεμερισμένοι—The periphrastic future perfect suggests a state or condition that is in the future. *From now on* people who are confronted with Jesus in the Gospel message will be in a state of division (emphasized by the word order with διαμεμερισμένοι in last place). The idea is similar to 2:34–35. In 11:17–18 Jesus spoke of a kingdom or house being divided, but here it is the people in the house who are divided. (CC p. 520)

Opposition to Jesus may split families, pitting father against son, mother against daughter, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and vice versa, as prophesied in Micah 7:6. This division within families will be reiterated by Jesus after the banquet parable: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters and even his own life also, he is not able to be my disciple” (14:26). Familial division reappears in the context of Jesus' final apocalyptic discourse: “And you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put to death some of you, and you will be hated by all because of my name” (21:16–17). These further references show how division between the disciples and the world will increase as Jesus nears Jerusalem. And it will be no different during the time of the church, as the consummation of eschatological judgment draws near. Yet the disciples will not stand alone. Even if forsaken and persecuted by their biological families, they are part of the family of God through the new kinship of all who hear the Word of Jesus and do it (see comments on 8:19–21). (CC p. 525)

three against two and two against three – πέντε ἐν ἐνὶ ... τρεῖς ἐπὶ δυσὶν καὶ δύο ἐπὶ τρισίν—This may be an attempt to capture the sense of the parallel in Micah 7:6, where the older generation is pitted against the younger one: parents (two) against their children (three). The unequal numbers suggest continuing conflict with disciples sometimes prevailing and at other times on the defensive, but the battle is not an even standoff or stalemate. (CC p. 521)

Families would be deeply divided over what to make of Jesus. (TLSB)

12:49–53 Jesus expresses a deep desire to fulfill God’s plan of salvation once for all, even though it means going to the cross. The depth of His commitment naturally forces His followers to decide what is most important for them, as well. As you wrestle with so great a challenge, take comfort in the One who calls you. He is faithful. • Lord Jesus, when earthly relations cause me to make You and Your kingdom anything less than my first priority, strengthen me and lead me back into the way of life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)