

***Weather Forecasting***  
***King of Glory Lutheran Church***  
***Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry***  
***August 16-17, 2025***  
***Luke 12:49-56***

[Jesus said:] <sup>49</sup> “I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already ablaze! <sup>50</sup> I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! <sup>51</sup> Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! <sup>52</sup> From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; <sup>53</sup> 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.”

<sup>54</sup> 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. <sup>55</sup> And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. <sup>56</sup> 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?”

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*How do you move a piece of furniture at the weather station? With four casters.*

*Don't trust big changes in the weather. It's just a front.*

Today Jesus is praising a crowd of people for their ability to do weather forecasting<sup>i</sup>, but chastising them over their inability to read the signs of the times. In Jesus day in Palestine, a dark cloud over the Mediterranean Sea, meant rain. And a dry wind coming from the south over the desert, meant even more winds were on the way.

It is as if Jesus is saying, “you read the weather signs so easily! And yet you cannot figure out the signs that I am giving you mean the kingdom of God is on the way!”

I think we can sympathize with Jesus' frustration. He lived his mission day in and day out. With every breath he took, and every fiber of his being, Jesus knew and understood what he was sent to do. As incarnate God, the flesh and blood that

embodied God's true character, Jesus was never even a heartbeat away from His mission. The cross and all that meant was ever before Him.

How could people not see it? How could they not understand? The healings. The miraculous feedings. Holy Spirit preaching that made the hair stand up on your neck! And yet...and yet. Did they not want to see? Did they not want to understand? Jesus was making it as clear as the darkening clouds in the sky. The man must have felt he was banging his head against a wall at times.

In the verses right before these, Jesus, talking alone with the disciples again makes his vision and mission very clear. Fire. Baptism. Division.

Fire in scripture has multiple meanings. We remember the pillar of fire that led the people of Israel at nighttime in the book of Exodus. It was a sign of God's presence with them. Fire is also purifying. In Malachi 3:2-3, it says, who can endure his coming? He will be like a refiner's fire." purifying God's people. Lastly, fire is about judgment. In revelation, Satan and his army are consumed by fire (20:7-10). Jesus comes in judgment, to purify, and to be with God's people.

His baptism was once with water. Baptism was assigned a sign of judgment and purification. We use the language about washing away sin. And yet Jesus seems to be speaking of another baptism on two wooden cross beams. The judgment and purification he brings, will also be brought upon himself.

It is no wonder, that Jesus would get frustrated occasionally. The end game for Him is painful agony. How can others not understand that the kingdom of God is at hand? And furthermore, not take upon themselves any sacrifice either?

In these verses, Jesus is very clear that loyalty to his way of life, a life of love and forgiveness and ultimate humility, ought to come before loyalty to anything else.

Rose is a Christian in a small village in northwest China. Recently her village has become known for the persecution of Christians. She tells the story in her own words about the night that the church was holding a meeting for local workers. Authorities burst in and 20 workers were detained along with 10 other believers.

They were asked all sorts of questions about how they got to know the church leaders, how did they communicate with each other, what other area was the church in. This time, they were all released. But then it happened again, and people were fined and spent days in prison.

Rose says this, “the Bible tells us that we must not stop gathering.”<sup>ii</sup>

According to the Open Doors US organization, one in seven Christians are persecuted worldwide, two in five are persecuted in Asia. In other parts of the world, our brothers and sisters in Christ are called to give up so much to be loyal to God.

I share that story not to produce guilt. But rather asking that we be weather forecasters and reflect on the signs of our own times. What are those signs in our world, nation and community?

The coming kingdom of God is marked by Jesus’ life of love, forgiveness, and humility. Those who rule now and all of us who are lured by wealth, status, and power will surely be threatened by Jesus’ reign if we enjoy our current life of comfort and prosperity. (Repeat)

For when we allow wealth status and power to define our lives, we become increasingly at a distance to those whose lives are defined by poverty and insignificance. Those who have no power.

It might be a weather forecasting question to ask, do the actions of those who lead nations and communities bring peace and prosperity to their citizens or not?

It might be a weather forecasting question to ask, what is so threatening about Christians that they have to worship in secret? We might want to ask what is so threatening about people of color who simply want to go to work every day without the threat of being arrested. We might even want to ask, what are the graven images which get worshipped the most by any of our elected officials?

I am also reminded that Jesus said “why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye and do not see the log in your own?” (Mt 7:3)

Therefore, two thoughts for us in becoming more Christlike.

First, we can have a personal faith statement. It serves as a daily mission like Jesus had. For example:

\*My body is a temple of the living. God and I want to use it to Worship God every day in every way.

\*I am claimed by God in the waters of baptism and I will let my light shine.

\*God is my light and salvation, of whom or what shall I be afraid?

Then when you have your personal faith statement, we can take a look at everything that is hindering us from following through on that faith statement. Is it family dynamics? Is it money? Or fear of something or someone? That kind of personal weather forecasting can help increase our loyalty to God.

Secondly, passages like this are always a challenge to hear outside of the context they were written in. Particularly when a few verses are plucked out of a chapter and put in front of you on a bulletin.

As I was writing this sermon, the Holy Spirit brought to my mind a song about God's never-ending, unconditional love. As we all are led by the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and lives more deeply to God, we can trust that God's love is walking with us. God knows what is holding you and I back. God will help us work on those things together. So if the only thing we've heard from the sermon is God's law with a capital L, then I want us to take home a word of grace, capital G.

In the end, it will only be God's love which motivates us to let go of our perceived wealth, status and power to take up Jesus' kingdom of love, forgiveness and humility. Jesus' love is our true forecast; day in and day out. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Main ideas for sermon from <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-20-3/commentary-on-luke-1249-56>

<sup>ii</sup> Opendoorsus.org