

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

FOLLOWING GOD'S LEADING INDICATOR

Luke 12:49-56

**Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Analysis by Paul Jaster**

49I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! 51Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 53they 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."

54He 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. 55And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. 56You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

DIAGNOSIS: Stormy Weather

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (Love Problem) : *Following the Wrong Leading Indicators*

Having a keen weather-eye is critical. What sane person doesn't want to be forewarned of the tornado's track, deadly flash floods, and life-threatening heat? The problem with the "crowd" in Luke 12, however, is that they are tempted to follow the wrong leading indicators—the "yeast of the Pharisees." A self-serving, glory-seeking, separatistic, commandment-centered reading of Moses and the prophets rather than trusting in the self-sacrificing, sinner-seeking, all inclusive promises of Christ. Mea culpa! I too am guilty as charged. Across the top of my web browser I have icons for a host of web sites I check daily to get a "heads-up" of what is coming down the pike: USA Today, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, New York Times, Politico, Real Clear Politics, The Big Picture, The Weather Channel, etc. Not one daily leads me to God's promises in Christ. I have my weather-eye on other things.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Faith Problem) : *Hypocrisy Exposed*

As with bread, the exterior effects of the inner yeast cannot long be hidden. Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of those who buy into and swallow the "yeast of the Pharisees." Like a performer, they are "play-acting," creating a public impression that is at odds with their real purposes and motivations. They are religious, pious and meticulously law-abiding on the outside but lack social justice and loyalty to God on the inside—the very two things the law most urgently requires.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Hope Problem) : *Eschatological Disaster*

In the end, these legal eagles will be charged with a line of guilt that goes back to the world's foundations, denied a life-

saving defense before the ultimate Judge who has the authority to cast into hell, cut off, and placed with the unfaithful. Compared to this, the ecological and economic disasters so prominently predicted on my row of news sources are a drop in the bucket and a picnic barbecue. “That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating,” Jesus just said two verses earlier in Luke 12:47.

PROGNOSIS: A Change in Seasons

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Hope Answer) : *A Change In Seasons*

With Jesus comes a change of seasons. Jesus is not “play-acting.” Jesus is God befriending sinners. His public behavior, his words and actions, are 100% congruent with God’s purposes and motivations. His table talk and manners alone are a sufficient sign of that for anyone with an ear to hear and an eye to see. In almost every chapter in Luke’s gospel, Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal. And Jesus eats with everyone. The rich and poor. Male and female. The well-behaved and sinners.

Jesus gets crucified for the way he ate—which is the baptism with which he is to be baptized and for which he is under stress until it is completed. But God raises him from the dead to verify the words and deeds that Jesus said and did at mealtime with the stamp of God’s approval. All this is part of that “divine necessity” so that repentance and forgiveness of sins can be proclaimed in his name to all the nations of the world (24:47). Which means that his word of promise is good for us too.

Step 5: Advance Prognosis (Faith Answer) : *Drenched and Inflamed*

Those who correctly interpret the present time and see what God is doing in Jesus are drenched in baptism and inflamed by Pentecost. Like Jesus, they are not “play-acting.” Nor, do they

fret and worry about the future. Rather, they follow the lead of Jesus to show what is truly in their heart inflamed by Christ—a passion for social justice and faithful covenantal loyalty (love) to God and others.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (Love Answer) : *Division and Disruption*

Hearts inflamed and impassioned by Pentecost bring a division and disruption of a healthy kind, not to “rain” on anybody’s parade and “scorch” the earth, but rather to proclaim that Jesus is indeed God’s peace initiative just as the angels said at his birth (2:14) and as Jesus himself declared upon his resurrection (24:36). This proclamation causes division and a disruption because it speaks truth to power and redefines family ties...and so fierce resistance can be expected. Yet this resistance is an opportunity to be yeast, Jesus-style, and witness to the faith that is in us. A faith that says “Yes!,” “Absolutely yes.” “Yes, we do think that Jesus came to bring God’s peace to earth. The very peace our world so desperately needs.”