



## Bringing the Fire – Touchpoint for August 13, 2025

### Luke 12:49-56 (NRSVUE) – Bringing the Fire

<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 said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. <sup>55</sup>And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. Hypocrites! <sup>56</sup>You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?

### Grace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and breathe and have our being.

*“I have come to cast fire upon the earth...”*

Fire. Such a destructive word. It conjures memories of homes lost in Alta Dena California. A place I lived in for a couple of years. Where family welcomed me and shared the local mom and pop convenient stores, the coffee shops and the old parks with majestic trees.

They are all gone now due to fire.

These are typically the types of images we imagine when we think of fire.

Everything changes when there is a fire.

But there is also the kind of fire when someone drops poetic words that speak prophetic truth. In response someone will say...fire!

The alcoholic that awakens in their car miles from home and doesn’t know how they survived. They have a moment of clarity, and a flush of heat covers their body from the inside out. A shock of lucidity and gratitude emerge from surviving. They ask for help. Fire.

When something new is birthed, it is not all “comfort and joy.” For the one who carries a bundle of good news it is more like discomfort and joy. For 9 months there is an understanding and anticipation of the severe labor it will take for this sweet bundle to emerge. Every day of carrying the child the present moments and the ramifications are clear. It will be fire.

After the destructive nature of fire there is no way to salvage the way things were. But there is always the possibility of transformation.

John the Baptist knew what was to come when the messiah would emerge on the scene. John said, “I’m baptizing you with water but the one who comes after me will baptize you in Spirit and with fire.”

It is normal to not want fire, but fire is necessary for spiritual growth and transformation.

It is the human condition to resist fires of change and transformation brought by life's challenges or by a desire for spiritual awakening. Unfortunately, it is also part of the human condition to pridefully hold onto old ways of thinking and destructive patterns.

Why did the Romans and the rule-making priests in the synagogues refuse the life-giving fiery words of Jesus? Why did four hundred years of rule by the kings of the family of Solomon never prompt change until Jesus brought fire?

Listen to the reason theologian William Barclay gives...

"The president of the synagogue and those like him were people who loved systems more than people. They were more concerned that their own petty little laws should be observed than that a woman should be helped.

One of the great problems of a developed civilization is the relationship of the individual to the system. In times of war the individual vanishes. A man ceases to be a person and becomes a member of such and such an age group or the like. A few men are lumped together, not as individuals, but as living ammunition that is, in that terrible word, expendable. A [person] becomes no more than an item in a statistical list. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, afterwards Lord and Lady Passfield, were two great economists and statistical experts; but H. G. Wells said of Beatrice Webb that her trouble was that "she saw [people] as specimens walking."

On a more individual level, English poet W.H. Auden says, "We would rather be ruined than changed. We would rather die in our dread than climb the cross of the present and let our illusions die."

To "climb the cross of the present" must be what Jesus meant when he said, "You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and sky but why do you not know how to interpret the present time."

The fire Jesus brings refines. It burns differently than the destructive fire of pride.

What might happen if we allowed humility to win over pride and we surrender to a new way of thinking, of living. To give myself to a more evolved way of relating to the world around me?

Others may not appreciate it. Debates would ensue. The demons of the need to be right, be enough and to be in control may cause division. I may not belong to certain groups. I may even leave my church. The way of Christ will call us into a new way of being. A new way of being will cause disturbance and divisions within a system.

But we are addicted to a desire for sameness as a way of peace.

Jesus did not come to bring the peace of numbing sameness, but of newness which causes conflict. It steps on the toes of systems of domination and hierarchy.

Transformation is not a social invitation before it is an individual one. It is not a communal fire being brought by Jesus before it is an individual fire.

The birth mom, whose willingness to give herself to the pain of new birth understands her present moment.

The towns of Pasadena and Alta Dena that come together to heal from loss and to rebuild anew. They climb the cross of the present together. They face reality of their condition.

Jesus came to bring the fire of change.

Jesus knows his words alone will not bring change; it will cost him his life. Because a new liberating way causes division.

It may or may not cause us our life, but spiritual growth and transformation will cost us our old way of being. And that my friends is...fire!

*Amen*

### **Opening Songs**

#### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taize Choir, Remember Me)

Be Still, know that I am God

#### **Hearken to My Voice**

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Hearken to my voice, O Lord when I call. Have mercy on me and answer me.

You speak in my heart, and say, "Seek my face". Your face, Lord will I seek.

### **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

### **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

#### **Come O Lord and Set Us Free**

(John L. Bell, The Wild Goose Collection)

Come, O Lord and set us free. Give/Bring your people peace.

Come, O Lord and set us free. Come Lord Jesus, Come.

1. And take our guilt away. Give us your pardon Lord.
2. Free from our self-obsession. Free from each fond possession.
3. Free to affirm each other...as sister and as brother

Reshape the world you made. Let what your hand created...be always celebrated.

### **The Meal**

#### **Lord's Prayer**

(The Scottish Festival Singers)

### **Benediction**

#### **A Blessing**

(Margaret Rizza, Kevin Mayhew Ltd. Complete Chants Vol.1)

May the Lord bless you.

May the Lord protect you and guide you.

May His strength uphold you.

His light shine upon you.

His peace surround you.

His love enfold you.

May the Lord bless you.

*Amen.*