

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Luke 12:49-56

Year C - Proper 15, Text: Luke 12:49-53 (54-56)
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In this passage, Luke lists some of the reasons for the opposition directed toward Jesus and His disciples. It reflects Jesus' agony because many were rejecting His message — a message much bigger than most people realize. Jesus is saying much more than, "Don't worry! Although you are a sinner, I have forgiven you, and you will have eternal life" — which is true enough. But Jesus said and taught much more than that.

Verse 12:49: Jesus shares with His people insights in relation to possessions and faithful service. His brothers and sisters are to say goodbye to the old age and embrace Jesus' new age. Jesus' huge truth is that He came to cast the fire of *His Word and spirit* upon earth — destroying evil, empowering people to deal with their weaknesses, and strengthening His followers in their faith-walk.

Verse 12:50: Jesus is talking about the "baptism" of his death and resurrection, which he will undergo to wash us clean of our sin. We often think of baptism as a polite little ceremony with proud parents and cooing babies, but for followers of Jesus it is truly a joining to Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1–4). The implications of Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians 4:8–11 are profound:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.

For while we live, we are always being given up into death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.

Verses 12:51–53: The Word of God will cut across the most intimate human bonds. St. Luke never tires of insisting upon a total renunciation of the ways of the world. All life must be transformed and sanctified by our awareness of the presence of Jesus. The strug-

gle between the power of God and the powers of evil continues throughout life, and the powers of evil never surrender quietly.

In verses 52–53, Luke describes the divisions that take place even within the family circle in relation to acceptance or rejection of Jesus' Person and ministry. And, sad to say, these divisions have persisted down through the centuries. After all, when people realize that they have to choose between the traditional comfortable, cuddly, and cozy Jesus and the Real and Radical Servant Jesus, they find themselves confronted with big challenges.

Verses 12:54–56: According to Matthew 16:2–4, Jesus spoke these words in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. In Luke's scheme of things, Jesus spoke these words on the way from Galilee to Jerusalem (note Luke 9:51 and 19:28). In a very real sense, Luke sees Jesus' entire life as a journey to a cross and a tomb.

In the world of Jesus' day, men needed to be weather-wise because the rain clouds rising off the shores of the Mediterranean and the sirocco blasts from the southern deserts impacted their material interests in relation to crop growth. However, these same people were dull to spiritual realities. They could not see or read the signs that the Kingdom of God had broken in.

Things have not changed much since Jesus' day. Many who claim to be Christian only want to hear that they are sinners, that they have been forgiven, and that they will eventually go to heaven. They do not want to hear much about Jesus' call to radical servant-discipleship.

