**God’s Baby Shower**

Based on [Luke 12:49-56](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk12.49-56)

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Pentecost 13

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The central emphasis of today’s Gospel has to do with judgment, specifically the judgment of all humanity on the cross. The coming of the Son of God in human flesh does not bring peace to the earth but division (v. 51)…the angel’s herald on Christmas morning notwithstanding (Luke 2:14). Families will be divided over him; he will be the cause of controversy and the cause of stumbling. There will be no fence-riders when it comes to receiving him, because the fence riders are not really fence riders. They have already chosen peace on earth, while the disciples of Christ choose a peace that comes from heaven.

First Jesus says, “**I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!**” Jesus here shows his humanity. His coming to earth was for this central purpose…to be baptized with our sins and then to suffer the fire of God’s wrath that they deserve…and he is eager for it to happen. From the moment of his baptism in the Jordan river, Jesus had numbered himself with humanity, with the transgressors, with those who are by nature in rebellion against God. He numbered himself with you and me. He numbered himself with every murderer, rapist, adulterer, fornicator, every gossip, every covetous thought of every jealous person. He didn’t do these things himself, but he took the guilt and the blame, the indignity and shame upon himself and by standing in our place became a transgressor worthy of judgment by fire.

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. God’s fire is first laid on Jesus when he enters the waters of his baptism by John. From the moment of his baptism, Jesus stands under the Father’s wrath. And throughout his earthly ministry, he continues to stand under the Father’s wrath until that wrath is satisfied in his crucifixion. With every sickness Jesus heals, every sin he forgives, every dead person he raises, Jesus is both releasing us from our 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. This is what it means when he says, “**I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished**.”

Jesus is baptized with our sins, and he greatly distressed until it is accomplished. Most people think this means that Jesus is nervous to face the wrath of God and to suffer, and I have no problem with that interpretation. How many of you, when you have some great surgery or conflict to face aren’t distressed or preoccupied wishing simply to get on and over with it? But that’s not the whole picture.

Jesus is the selfless savior, and his distress is mainly found in this: that **he cannot rest until our sin is atoned for not because he wants his suffering to be over, but because he wants our sin to be over**. He is distressed so long as even the smallest speck of sin can make its claim on you. He’s like an anxious parent in that way. Today’s parents wait weeks, months, even years to baptize their children. Usually it’s because they wait until it’s convenient for as much of their family as possible. So they can “save the date” and to come and witness it. It was not always this way.

Martin Luther was baptized the day after his birth as was common practice in his time. **Infant mortality rate then was staggering compared to today, and parents were in very real distress because they were painfully aware of the reality that their child might die before receiving God’s grace promised and given in baptism.** Waiting even a day was cause for distress…as it should be for us. Not because we think God will forsake those who died on the way to the font; but rather because of the joy to be found in that moment, the moment when their sins are washed away and they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Now Jesus certainly knew that he wasn’t going to die before being baptized on the cross, before God’s wrath could be poured out on him instead of us. From the beginning God promised a savior and God never lies. And the scriptures many times point out how crowds were going to stone Jesus or throw him off a cliff, but the scriptures say “his time had not yet come.”

And At Gethsemane, Jesus sweat blood praying that the cup of wrath would be taken from him, so certainly he felt distress over the suffering itself. And the more Jesus forgave sins, the more the debt of humanity fell on him. The more people he clothed in his righteousness; the more he donned their filthy rags. Certainly his suffering our burdens was itself cause for distress, or else they wouldn’t be true burdens.

But the distress is more fully comprehended in the nervousness of a bridegroom about to say “I do.” It is the anxiousness of knowing the certain joy that is to come; but not possessing it yet. Our epistle lesson gets it right as it portrays Jesus to be “**the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:2). Suffering and death on the cross is precisely *how* Jesus attains the joy set before him by the father. His joy is not winning a crown for himself. His joy is attained and his distress is over **when** **your sins are paid for, when your uncleanness is cleansed**. The joy set before Jesus is that--by his sacrifice--your baptism, your “washing of water with the word”, will make you presentable to God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that you might be holy and without blemish.

Just as Jesus was eager to be baptized on the cross; we ought to be eager to baptize our newborns. For by faith we know what great things God gives to our babies at that moment. Forget the onesies and the bibs and the bottles given at the baby shower. Yes, plan long and for that so as many people can make it as possible..because there the more people the more gifts! **But do not hesitate to celebrate “God’s baby shower,” where he gives eternal treasures. In baptism he showers us with forgiveness of sins; he rescues from death and the devil; he gives eternal life to all who believe. In Baptism, he gives his Holy Spirit as a guarantee, and the filthy rags of sin are laid on Jesus, and Jesus white robe of righteousness is laid on the baptized.** And the only other person who really needs to make the appointment is Christ. And he has already made himself available for every single baptism-whenever and wherever it is held-because he has ascended to the right hand of the throne of God and is now everywhere ruling all things by the word of his power.

And all of you have received this baptism and these gifts are yours. Therefore, don’t hesitate to put off your old self daily. Those who have just showered don’t turn around to play in the mud. Put off all that is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness. Turn away from evil talk and slander, from self-indulgence and hypocrisy. **The scripture warns us, and we know that it is on account of these things the wrath of God is coming** (Colossians 3:5-6). But you have died to sin…don’t live in it. You have been baptized into purity; do not walk in impurity.

It really is astounding what great gifts we are given in Baptism…and for free! Free to us anyway; purchased at great price by Jesus on the cross—**but free to all who by faith receive this gift from the Son**. And yet it is amazing how much division is caused over baptism. How many families with mixed marriages squabble over whether to baptize their child Lutheran or Roman Catholic; or whether to baptize at all. How much anxiety and division has been cast upon the earth by the judgment of Jesus! Had he just stayed in heaven and not numbered himself with us--holding upon himself the bull’s-eye of sin on the cross--the judgment of wrath wouldn’t have come at all until the last day…and then we could have family peace. **Everyone would be eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage. Families would all agree to worship Baal, or Molech, or Science or whatever false God seems most beneficial to them at the time and cause the least controversy.** The world would be united in drunkenness, idleness and revelry. **The poor would keep quiet because they would have no hope; the wealthy would eat, drink and be merry suppressing the knowledge of God and celebrating their ignorance until the Lord comes again like a thief in the night, and like a trap springs all of humanity into the hellfire we deserve.** If only Jesus had not come to suffer that fire on the cross before the end of days, we would have peace on the earth in the meantime.

But thanks be to God he did not listen to our sinful hearts, because by nature we will always choose to put off suffering for present peace. **We bury conflict under the rug and sweep dissention away with idle laughter, and only talk about our true hatred of one another by gossiping in a corner where no brawls will break out so “keeping the peace.”** But God sent Jesus Christ right smack into the centre of all conflict and controversy to be the stumbling block upon which men will before the end either stumble in repentance, or be eventually crushed in judgment.

Thanks be to God that those who have been baptized have already been judged guilty in the flesh of Jesus, who suffered that judgment in our place. **And now we stand in conflict with the world that refuses to be judged in Christ, and so chooses to be judged when he comes in glory.** Heaven help them. It is because Christ has come ahead of the Last Day that fire has been cast on the earth. And because you carry Christ with you that there is division within your family. And so the world, the nations, the family are divided into two classes those who--through Christ--have died to the world and have peace with God; and those who—without Christ—live to the world so they can have peace on earth. Christ says, “I have come not to bring peace on earth--peace among family--but a sword of division.”

Finally, this Gospel ends with Christ pointing out the hypocrisy of the crowds who claim not to recognize him. **Everyone is a critic, everyone is a prophet. Go to the bars, to social events, to family gatherings…everybody’s got an opinion about what Hillary or Trump is or is not going to do…how the nation will be set back on track, or else plunged further down a spiral.** Everyone has an opinion about this or that person; who’s going to win the Olympic gold--and more on topic with the gospel--what to think about global climate change and why winter brough so much more snow and why the seasons are shorter than they were when I was little boy or girl—and what it all means. **Everyone has a prognostication on everything and yet, no one knows what to make of Jesus.** Was he just a myth, a good moral teacher like Benjamin Franklin or Ghandi, or was he really the Son of God and a blood sacrifice for mankind? You hypocrites, Jesus says, “**You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time**?”

A hypocrite is someone who pretends to know what he doesn’t; or one who pretends not to know what he does. **Of course the world has become what the Scriptures predicted:**

“*But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power*” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Of course this describes our world. **Not just our own hearts--which are constantly given to these things and need to be drowned in daily repentance--but a spot-on description of the very values held, even *promoted* by society today.** “Love of self” is taught in the schools; “Love of money” is taught in the home; “Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”…I don’t have to give examples. You know it’s the truth.

Jesus calls the crowds “hypocrites,” because they presume to know all manner of worldly predictions, but they pretend not to know who he is and what he has come for. **But his ministry bears witness to two things, first that the judgment of God is coming on account of unrighteousness, this is more certain that the weather forecast, or the political winds.** And second, Jesus ministry shows that he has paid for the sins of the world and saves from that judgment those who find their rest and trust in him. He heals you by bearing your sickness; he forgives you by bearing your guilt; he gives you new life, by offering his life to God.

***“Surely he has born our grief’s, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed***” (Isaiah 53:4-5).