

8/17/25
10th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from August 10th – August 16th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, judge eternal, you love justice and hate oppression, and you call us to share your zeal for truth. Give us courage to take our stand with all victims of bloodshed and greed, and, following your servants and prophets, to look to the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 12:32-40) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 12:49-56

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What does Jesus mean when he says that he came to cast fire on the earth?
2. In what ways do verses 49-53 challenge common understandings of what the gospel is all about?
3. What does Jesus criticize the crowd for in verses 54-56?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What practices (prayer, Scripture, solitude, community) help you become more discerning of "the times"?
2. What might "fire" from Jesus look like in today's world — in your heart, your church, or your community?
3. What signs of God's movement or activity do you see in the world today?

Memorize this verse: "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?" (Luke 12:56) What helps you "interpret the present time" without feeling overwhelmed?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 82. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

What does it cost us to go to Church? A free Saturday night or Sunday morning? A chance to sleep in? The money we place into the offering plate? Odds are, if we stop to think of it, it costs us very little to be a Christian today, even in an increasingly “post-Christian” culture. Not so in Jesus’ day. As Jesus indicates in this complicated and somewhat off-putting passage, those who followed him were regularly thrust into conflict and division, often with their own family members. To follow Jesus was to question the religious and economic and even political status quo. If you were Jewish, it meant accepting as the Messiah this itinerant rabbi who hung out with scandalous sinners and preached a message of love and forgiveness. It meant accepting as Messiah one who looked almost nothing like the warrior king David they had expected. If you were a Gentile, it meant accepting as the Messiah this itinerant rabbi who hung out with scandalous sinners and preached a message of love and forgiveness. It meant, accepting as Messiah one who looked almost nothing like what the culture held out as powerful or important.

Moreover, following Jesus meant not merely adopting new beliefs, but a new way of living. To be a follower of the one who accepted and even honored the disreputable meant that you needed to do the same, rejecting the easy temptation of judging others and instead inviting them into our lives. To be a follower of the one who preached love and forgiveness was to practice the same, particularly when it comes to those who differ from you even, and maybe especially, in terms of what they believe. I wonder if we might also find ourselves thrust into conflict and division with those we care about if we welcomed into our homes and congregations and social circles those whom society shuns. What would be the reaction of our family and friends and co-workers if we really acted like Jesus did? Across the Old Testament, the purifying fire Jesus seems to reference here is most often associated with the fire that burns away impure religious practices. Not impure as in “not liturgically correct,” but rather impure in that they tended to make religion a source of false comfort. Right religious practice and beliefs, too many have thought over the centuries, should exempt you from the suffering or disaster or poverty or even death all around you. In this regard, I believe little has changed. Think of the popular Christian obsession with “accepting Jesus into your heart” as the means by which to escape eternal punishment and secure an eternal reward. But what if faith wasn’t about guaranteeing future bliss but rather was an invitation to live differently now, to see those around us neither as souls to be saved or threats to be deterred, but rather to see everyone as God’s children to be loved, honored, and cared for?

So, what would it look like to live like, not just believe in, Jesus? Because we desperately want our faith to matter, to be useful to us, to shape the way we think about our work, our families, our money, and more. That church is not an obligation or spiritual destination, but a place to come to be encouraged, equipped, and sent to make a difference in the world. And a place to return to when living like Jesus creates division. Because it will. But it will also create joy. Because the one who sends us out was himself baptized by fire and is both with us and for us as we come to church to be reminded of our identity as God’s beloved. And we are sent out again in mission to tell others in word and deed that God loves them as well.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen