

Luke 12:49-56

IN C.S. LEWIS SERIES “THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA” JESUS IS SYMBOLIZED BY A LION NAMED ASLAN.

ASLAN IS DESCRIBED AS NOT BEING A TAME LION- THAT IS HE CANNOT BE CONTROLLED, FOR HE IS THE GREAT KING.

WHEN ASKED IF ASLAN IS SAFE, THE RESPONSE GIVEN WAS: “SAFE? WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT SAFE? OF COURSE HE ISN’T SAFE, BUT HE **IS** GOOD.”

THAT STATEMENT CAME TO MIND WHEN I READ THE WORDS OF JESUS WE FOUND IN TODAY’S GOSPEL PASSAGE, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT EASY TO LISTEN TO.

AFTER ALL THEY DO NOT READILY FIT IN WITH THE MESSAGE OF COMFORT AND JOY DELIVERED, BY ANGELS, AT HIS BIRTH.

THUS IT CAN BE A STARTLING REVELATION TO HEAR THAT JESUS APPARENTLY WOULD NOT HAVE SUNG: “LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH, AND LET IT BEGIN WITH ME!”

TRULY, MOST CHRISTIAN HYMNS, OFFER AN FAR DIFFERENT VIEW ABOUT JESUS AND HIS IMPACT IN THE WORLD THAN HIS OWN WORDS IN LUKE 12.

THE HYMNS SPEAK ABOUT THE SAVIOR AS A BRINGER OF PEACE NOT DIVISION.

ONE SAYS: “PEACE LIKE A RIVER IS FLOODING MY SOUL”, AND ANOTHER DECLARES:

“I HAVE FOUND A WONDROUS SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST THE SOUL’S DELIGHT. EVERY BLESSING OF HIS FAVOR FILL MY HEART WITH HOPE SO BRIGHT.”

THE SENTIMENTS OF THESE HYMNS DO NOT APPEAR TO MATCH WELL WITH JESUS WORDS IN THE GOSPEL READING THIS MORNING.

AFTER ALL BRINGING DOWN FIRE FROM HEAVEN AND THE WARNING ABOUT DIVISION RATHER THAN PEACE—ARE HARDLY WHAT WE WOULD CALL- A RIVER OF PEACE, THE “SOUL’S DELIGHT”, OR “EVERY BLESSING OF HIS FAVOR.”

AND YET, THE ANSWER I THINK MOST CHRISTIANS WOULD GIVE TO JESUS’ QUESTION- “DO YOU THINK I CAME TO BRING PEACE?” WOULD BE- “**YES-** ABSOLUTELY”.

IN FACT- THE BIBLE SEEMS TO PROMISE US AS MUCH WHEN IT CALLS JESUS THE “PRINCE OF PEACE.”

AND WHEN JESUS WAS BORN THE ANGEL EVEN PROCLAIMED “PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL...”

JESUS HIMSELF PROCLAIMED A MESSAGE OF PEACE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, IN DECLARATIONS LIKE:

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS...” AND “MY PEACE I GIVE TO YOU...”

HE EVEN STEPPED OVER BARRIERS BETWEEN JEW AND GENTILE, MALE AND FEMALE, AS WELL AS DIVISION BETWEEN THE SAMARITANS AND THE JEWS.

SO WHAT, WE MAY WONDER, IS BEHIND THE DIRE WARNINGS LIKE: BRINGING FIRE UPON THE EARTH AND DIVISION INSTEAD OF PEACE IN OUR FAMILY AND OTHER RELATIONSHIPS?

IT CERTAINLY SEEMS JESUS IS DOING HIS BEST TO DISSUADE US OF ANY NOTIONS THAT HE IS GENTLE, MEEK, AND MILD, AND WILL FILL OUR LIVES WITH PEACE.

FIRE, AFTER ALL, IS OFTEN A SYMBOL FOR JUDGMENT IN THE BIBLE, AS WE HEARD LAST WEEK IN **PSALM 50:3-5**—

“OUR GOD COMES AND WILL NOT BE SILENT; A FIRE DEVOURS BEFORE HIM, AND AROUND HIM A TEMPEST RAGES. HE SUMMONS THE HEAVENS ABOVE AND THE EARTH, THAT HE MAY JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.”

IT COULD BE SAID THEREFORE, THAT THE SAVIOR INDEED MAY BE SPEAKING ON ONE LEVEL ABOUT THE END TIMES, THAT IS- THE JUDGMENT THAT WILL ACCOMPANY HIS SECOND COMING.

HOWEVER SINCE FIRE CAN ALSO MEAN **CLEANSING** AND NOT ONLY PUNISHMENT, IT MAY ALSO BE TRUE THAT CHRIST’S WORDS HERE ARE SPEAKING ABOUT SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE END TIMES.

AFTER ALL THE BIBLE HAS ALSO USED FIRE AS A SYMBOL FOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD, LIKE WITH:

THE BURNING BUSH, THE PILLAR OF FIRE, AND OF COURSE THE TONGUES OF FIRE ON PENTECOST.

NEXT, THE SAVIOR'S WORDS ABOUT WISHING THE FIRE WAS KINDLED, ALONG WITH HIS BAPTISM GIVE US ANOTHER CLUE AS TO WHAT HE PROBABLY MEANT BY FIRE FROM HEAVEN.

HIS BAPTISM, IN THIS INSTANCE IS NOT OF WATER OR EVEN THE HOLY SPIRIT, BUT OF HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH FOR OUR SIN.

THEREFORE BAPTISM IN THE PASSAGE REFERS TO PASSING THROUGH A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE, WHICH FOR JESUS MEANT THE CROSS.

A MAN NAMED DAVID ELTON TRUEBLOOD WROTE AN HYMN ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF JESUS BRINGING FIRE. IT SAYS:

“GOD, WHOSE PURPOSE IS TO KINDLE, NOW IGNITE US WITH YOUR FIRE.

WHILE THE EARTH AWAITS YOUR BURNING, WITH YOUR PASSION US INSPIRE.”

THESE WORDS REMIND US THAT THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, ALONG WITH THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON ALL WHO ARE SAVED-

JESUS INDEED BROUGHT ABOUT A FIRE IN THE WORLD THAT IS STILL BURNING.

AND- WE SHOULD NOTE, THIS FIRE WILL NOT BE PUT OUT UNTIL GOD'S WILL IS ALWAYS AND FULLY DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

SO YOU SEE, THE SAVIOR'S DECLARATION ABOUT BRINGING FIRE DOWN UPON THE EARTH IS THE MEANS BY WHICH THE BLESSINGS OF HIS FAVOR ARE MADE POSSIBLE.

PERHAPS THIS NEWS DOES NOT MAKE TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE MORE PLEASANT TO HEAR, BUT IT HOPEFULLY MAKES JESUS' WARNING A LITTLE CLEARER.

THE SAME THING IS TRUE CONCERNING JESUS' SURPRISING DECLARATION THAT HE HAS NOT COME TO EARTH TO BRING PEACE!

A GOOD EXPLANATION OF JESUS' MESSAGE IN VERSES **51-53** OF LUKE 12, SAYS:

“WHILE JESUS CAME TO MAKE PEACE FOR US WITH GOD BY EARNING OUR FORGIVENESS (ON THE CROSS), HE DID NOT COME TO MAKE OUR LIVES PEACEFUL.”

THE SECOND VERSE OF TRUEBLOOD'S HYMN ADDRESSES THIS ISSUE, SAYING:

“GOD, WHO STILL A SWORD DELIVERS RATHER THAN A PLACID PEACE, WITH YOUR SHARPENED SWORD DISTURB US, FROM COMPLACENCY RELEASE!

SAVE US NOW FROM SATISFACTION, WHEN WE PRIVATELY ARE SET FREE, YET ARE UNDISTURBED IN SPIRIT BY OUR NEIGHBOR'S MISERY.”

WE, WHO ARE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST ARE INDEED EXPECTED AND EMPOWERED BY HIS SPIRIT TO BE CHRIST'S PRESENCE AND VOICE IN THE WORLD.

INDEED, JESUS INTENDS FOR US TO BE ACTIVELY CARING FOR OTHERS, AS WELL AS WITNESSING ABOUT HIM.

THIS MEANS THERE WILL BE AN INEVITABLE DISRUPTION OF PERSONAL PEACEFULNESS, AS WELL AS PEACE IN SOME OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS.

FURTHERMORE, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT BEING A CHRISTIAN MEANS WE WILL MAKE SOME CHOICES THAT COULD LEAD TO PERSECUTION.

AND SO, THOSE WHO ARE OBSERVANT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY NOTICE THAT ACCORDING TO THE EVENTS RECORDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT-

JESUS DID NOT COME INTO THE WORLD TO **SMOOTH** THINGS OVER, BUT RATHER HIS PRESENCE DISRUPTED THE STATUS QUO OF THE WORLD.

YES HE HEALED PEOPLE PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY, BUT HIS HEALING OFTEN CREATED CONFLICT FOR JESUS, AND AT TIMES, FOR THE PERSON HE HEALED.

THEREFORE IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUPERFICIAL PEACE AND TRUE PEACE.

THE PEACE OF ROME, KNOWN AS “PAX ROMANA”, WAS THE SUPERFICIAL KIND.

IT WAS THE PEACE OF A SUPERPOWER IMPOSING ITS WILL ON OTHERS, AND ENFORCING PEACE BY IRON FIST OF ITS LEGIONS.

BUT TRUE PEACE IS PEACE WITH **JUSTICE**, THE PEACE OF GOD’S REIGN ON THE EARTH, WHICH INCLUDES THE END OF-SIN, AS WELL AS ILLNESS, SUFFERING, AND DEATH.

THIS IS THE PEACE OF SALVATION, WHICH WILL ONLY BE FULLY MANIFEST WHEN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN REIGNS UPON THE EARTH AS WELL.

THEREFORE JESUS WAS WARNING PEOPLE THAT HE WAS NOT BRINGING A “QUICK FIX”, OR INSTANT SOLUTION TO THE WORLD’S PROBLEMS.

MUCH TO THE CONTRARY, HIS PRESENCE IN THE WORLD GAVE RISE TO A RENEWED CONFLICT WITH SATAN, AND ALL PEOPLE WHO OPPOSE GOD.

LISTEN TO HOW SOMEONE ELSE EXPLAINS WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH JESUS AND WHY THE “PRINCE OF PEACE” BROUGHT DIVISION.

“JESUS DID NOT COME TO BE POPULAR...JESUS CAME TO BE MORE THAN A BUDDY.

HE WAS ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THE FORCES OF EVIL THAT WERE OPPOSED TO HIM, AND HE WAS NOT GOING TO BACK DOWN.”

THIS MEANS THAT CHRISTIANS, WHEN WE FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS, ALSO SHOULD NOT BACK DOWN WHEN CONFRONTED BY THE FORCES OF EVIL.

UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS MUCH HARDER AND MORE DISTURBING FOR US TO: **LOVE**, PRAY FOR, AND DO GOOD TO-OUR ENEMIES, THAN IT IS TO HATE THEM, AS WE OPPOSE THEIR WAYS.

YES, LOVE-- LOVING GOD AND OTHERS IS OFTEN CHALLENGING WORK AND THEREFORE IT IS NOT ALWAYS PEACEFUL.

CONSIDER THE MESSAGE OF **JOHN 3:16**, WHICH PROCLAIMS GOD’S LOVE FOR THE WORLD IS SHOWN BY HIM GIVING HIS SON TO THE WORLD.

THIS MEANS, OF COURSE GOD GAVE US JESUS TO DIE ON THE CROSS IN ORDER TO ATONE FOR SIN.

THAT WAS NOT AT ALL A PEACEFUL EVENT, EITHER IN HEAVEN OR ON EARTH.

TRULY JESUS, AS HE HUNG ON THE CROSS, BORE THE WEIGHT OF ALL HUMAN CONFLICT AND DIVISION---BETWEEN US AND GOD, AND AMONG ONE ANOTHER.

ALSO, HIS MOTHER, HIS CLOSEST DISCIPLES, AND ALL OTHER FOLLOWERS WERE DISTURBED AND BURDENED BY THE GRIEF, FEAR, AND DISMAY THEY EXPERIENCED WHEN JESUS DIED.

THEN THERE IS ALSO THE FACT THAT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS WAS NOT, AT LEAST AT FIRST, A **PEACEFUL** EXPERIENCE FOR MANY OF WHO LOVED AND FOLLOWED HIM.

TRULY, FOR THE MOST PART- IT WAS FEAR AND NOT PEACE THAT INITIALLY FLOODED HEARTS, MINDS, AND SOULS OF THOSE WHO ENCOUNTERED THE RISEN CHRIST.

AND ONE REASON FOR THIS LACK OF PEACE WAS THAT THE DISCIPLES WERE NO DIFFERENT FROM THE CROWD WHEN IT CAME TO THEIR FAILURE TO PERCEIVE SIGNS FROM GOD.

REMEMBER-JESUS CRITICIZED THE CROWD BECAUSE THEY WERE WISE ENOUGH TO LEARN SIGNS IN NATURE, BUT TOO FOOLISH TO TRY AS HARD TO READ **GOD’S** SIGNS.

THE EXAMPLE HE USED WAS HOW PEOPLE KNEW THAT WHEN YOU SEE A CLOUD IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION IT MEANT RAIN.

BUT WHEN THE WIND CAME FROM THE DESERT IT MEANT A HOT SPELL.

AND JESUS LAMENTED THE FACT THEY FAILED TO BE AS DISCERNING WHEN IT CAME TO GOD'S WORD, AND THE SIGNS HE HAD BEEN GIVING THEM THROUGH HIS TEACHINGS AND MIRACLES.

THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS WERE OFTEN NO BETTER THAN THE CROWD. THEY TOO MISSED A LOT OF THE SIGNS JESUS GAVE, AND HEARD ONLY WHAT THEY WANTED TO HEAR.

YET THIS IS GOOD NEWS FOR US, BECAUSE IF JESUS DID NOT GIVE UP ON HIS ORIGINAL DISCIPLES; HE CERTAINLY WILL NOT GIVE UP ON US.

FURTHERMORE, JESUS **HAS** ALREADY PROVIDED US WITH THE PEACE OF OUR RECONCILIATION WITH GOD THROUGH THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS.

THIS GIVES US EVEN GREATER ASSURANCE THAT JESUS WILL NEVER LEAVE OR FORSAKE THOSE WHOM HE HAS SAVED.

THUS THE PEACE CHRIST PROVIDES IN THE CURRENT AGE IS A PEACE THAT IS WITHIN- EVEN IF OUR LIVES ARE NOT AT A PARTICULAR TIME PEACEFUL.

THIS IS THE KIND OF PEACE FOUND IN THE WORDS OF PAUL- "IN LIFE AND IN DEATH WE BELONG TO GOD."

AND SO WE CAN SING: "I HAVE FOUND A WONDROUS SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST THE SOUL'S DELIGHT. EVERY BLESSINGS OF HIS FAVOR FILL MY HEART WITH HOPE SO BRIGHT."

PRAISE GOD FOR THIS PEACE WHICH IS PRESENT IN THE MIDST OF THE BLESSINGS AND THE WOES OF LIFE. AMEN