

Luke 12: 54-59; II Peter 3:1-7; Knowing How to discern the Present Age I. Discerning the Time II. Settling Accounts

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it takes wisdom to know how to act. It is very common for a person to be more guarded or hesitant with their words when surrounded by strangers, but to become more open and freer when surrounded by friends. Consider also that the time of the day is reflected by our actions- we tend to wake up, drink our coffee and go to work in the mornings while we drink tea and relax before we go to bed at night. Knowing our context impacts how we act. When we put this truth into the context of world history- do we know how to discern the present age so that we might understand how to act! Over the past weeks we have looked at Luke 12, and the pressing matter of Jesus' return stands before us! Jesus is coming back- soon- to judge the living and the dead. He is coming to separate and divide- to judge all men! In the parable of the faithful and wise manager, the good stewards are the ones who are busy, faithful and obedient while they wait for the owner of the house to return. With this continued focus on the coming of Jesus as the just judge that we consider the remaining verses of this chapter. With this theme: Jesus Christ exhorts us to discern the present age so that we might live wisely.

### **I. Discerning the Time**

Jesus starts in v. 57 with the topic of discerning the times. What time does it appear to be? Literally, what is the appearance of the earth? As humans we are creatures of time. Not the minute and second kind of time- but it has been standard practice for generation for people to look at the sun and say- its about noon. Or the sun is going down, it's getting late. This common wisdom also applies to weather- in the land of Palestine, they were used to looking West at the Mediterranean Sea. If a cloud rose up from the sea, it usually meant rain as the clouds would rush up on the hills the rain would come. And being to the north of a Desert of the Negev, when the wind blew up from the South it would become hot and dry. This was a common knowledge- to look at the sky and feel the wind- and know what was soon to take place. An old sailing adage said- red sky in the morning sailor's warning, red sky at night sailor's delight. So these sorts of common tricks of the

trade weather signs have been around for years. But Jesus is not impressed with the people's observation skills. No- as he rebukes in v. 56- hypocrites! To be a hypocrite is to say or act one way in a certain context, and to act completely contrary in another. The people were wise in the way of weather, but they could not see the storm clouds building in relation to their own nation. These crowds- those who were following and listening to Jesus- they could analyze, examine and read the signs of the weather. But they could not discern the spiritual state of their hearts, nor did they see the present age. Now the age that Jesus is referring to in v. 56- the signs of the present time- were the signs that testified concerning the identity of Jesus. Back in chapter 11, Jesus said that His ability to heal the sick and raise the dead is a powerful sign that the age of the Kingdom of God had come upon them. The sign of casting out demons and feeding the multitudes- along with the preaching of the gospel to their nation- was like the wind that comes before the heat or the cloud that comes before a storm. It should have been clear- Jesus is the Messiah and the Kingdom of God was among them. However, the vast majority of people enjoyed the signs but never stopped to consider what the sign was pointing to. They failed to accept the teaching and identity of Jesus as the Christ. This stubborn rejection was going to bring about the Day of Judgement- as the nation would be destroyed and the temple burned on 70AD. That very generation was going to see the day of turmoil and pain as Rome burned Jerusalem to the ground because they did not know how to interpret the time. This applies to our context as well. We live in the midst of a worldly-wise generation. Weathermen can tell us the expected highs and lows for a week or more in advance. And as much as we tease them, they are usually pretty close most days. Almost everyone watches the weather or checks their apps to see what tomorrow will bring. But do most people know how to read the signs of the present age? Do they know what time of day it is, spiritually speaking? Consider the signs of the time that we read in II Tim. 3:1- in the last days, people will be lovers of self, lovers of pleasure and money. They will be disobedient and unholy! The signs of the time tell us that the day is late- the age is far spent! There are storm clouds on the horizon and the wind is picking up! But most people- being hypocrites- refuse to believe a day of judgement is coming! They say as they did in II

Peter 3- where is this coming day? The world goes on as it always has. All things are continuing- nothing changes! But what they forget is that the earth and all men were judged once before- in the days of Noah. And the fire of judgement is being kindled by Jesus as 12:49 said. Just as that generation refused to see- so our generation deliberately denies the truth! There is a future and certain judgement- and the signs are telling us- that day is near! May God have mercy on those who know more about the weather than they do concerning the state of their own soul and the judgment to come! Refusing to act wisely concerning the weather is so unwise- like attempting to brave the harsh Wednesday weather in bathing suit. Well, that is what it is like to ignore the signs of the age! To live like there will be no day of reckoning while respecting the weather is foolish! Even to this day in His Word- Jesus continue to reveal that the age of the Spirit is upon us- and the master of the house will soon return!

## **II. Settling Accounts**

But as Jesus continues, He not only commends wisdom to know that the end is coming swiftly, He also exhorts us to live in light of this truth! The end of the age is at hand, so how will we now live? In v. 57 Jesus transitions to a seemingly different topic. A helpful, practical truth of seeking to settle accounts quickly before things get worse. In this account a guilty person is going to be taken to court. Once at court, the judge will decide the matter and the judge cannot and will not bend the law. Strict justice will be meted out. But on the way to the courthouse, the accused meets the one he has wronged. It is wise to settle accounts quickly, before you get to the judge, because the accuser tends to be more gracious. For example, if you owe money to the hospital for a certain procedure you received, it is in your best interest to meet with the financial depart of the hospital to discuss your desire to pay. Together you can come up with a payment plan which is often less than you originally owed. However, if you ignore the bills from the hospital your account will eventually be turned over to a collection agency. They will not take no for an answer, they will go after you for ever sent- even going to the judges of the land to garnish your wages until you have paid you due plus interest. So Jesus is wise- it is better to settle accounts quickly. However, when we put this teaching in the

context of Luke 12, we see that there is another judge who needs to be satisfied! In the larger context of this chapter, we know that all of humanity is on their way to meet their judge. We are like the man of v. 58- on the way to meet the magistrate or the source of authority. If we want to avoid the magistrate demanding a full payment, then we had better seek peace today! To say this another way, the time is short- we are being brought quickly before the judge. We are on the way as v. 58 says- in transit! One of the chief lies that the Devil tells us is that we can repent tomorrow- we can seek peace with God later in life! But you do not know what tomorrow hold- if there will be a tomorrow! To postpone is to chose to appear before the judgement bench after the day of salvation has expires! So repent now- seek peace now! Today is the day of salvation! How can we who are guilty secure peace before we meet the maker and ruler of all? By asking Jesus to make a payment for us! In order to settle our account before the day of judgment, we need to find a way to secure peace with our God! The only way that this peace can be found is if Jesus becomes our righteousness- that He would be our ransom! If not, we will find ourselves in the hands of an angry God who is a consuming fire- when that final day arrives! As I John 1:8 says, if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But since we do have sin, we are guilty, indebted and on our way to our court date- let us make use of the escape that God has provided in Jesus Christ! If not, when the just judge returns, He will cast out the wicked into the hell fire prepared for the devils and his angels.

To conclude, fallen man refuse to acknowledge what time it is during the present age. What is the present time- what does the clock read? Well, the sun is going down! We are closer now than ever before! We live in the end of the age- people are lovers of self and pleasure. The judge stands at the door! The cloud is rising in the West and wind is blowing from the south. In wisdom, let us learn to discern the present age. We need to find peace with God through Christ before it is too late! As Rom. 6:23 says, the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!