

11-14-21 St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX “Seek, Speak and Live the Truth”

*Mark 13:1-8 As (Jesus) was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?” Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. 9 “When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me.[a] 10 For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. 11 But when you are arrested and stand trial, don’t worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit. 12 “A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. 13 And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

I always got a kick out of the old TV show, I’ve got a secret. You’d have someone there who the contestant would know. It might be a relative like a mother or a best friend or a co-pilot. They were asked questions so that you could guess who they were. But secrets work against us – if we are doing wrong, for example, and think we can keep it a secret, we cannot. David had a wife and a whole bunch of concubines which are spare wives. But he lusted after Bathsheba and set things up so her husband would get killed on the front lines in battle. Then he married Bath Sheba. There weren’t news media around those days examining everything that everyone did, but word has a way of getting out. David was found out and confronted by God’s prophet. He repented of his sin against God. He couldn’t keep his sin, a secret. Take the associate director of Focus on the Family. He announced that he would be stepping down because he was stepping out on his wife. He

admitted it and did something about it, but the world laughed at the ministry of Focus on the Family. A comedian said that this guy was focusing on the wrong family.

The world will not let God's people forget their sins. The Holy Spirit is always in the business of convicting people of sin. Some turn to Christ and are saved. Others laugh at the church as a bunch of hypocrites. Anyone who is not perfect is a hypocrite if they take Jesus as Lord seriously though we are all sinners along with the critics. Course, some of them don't believe in sins so you have to translate it as 'flaws.'

The same cautions that accompany the spiritual gifts apply here. Projection is a danger that you should have the same gift as I do to be acceptable to me. In this case, you need to be a Christian to be acceptable to me. Elevation-my gift is more important than yours. That is pride plus. We can apply that here as our being Christian makes us better than the other person who does not follow Jesus when in reality, we are simply saved sinners. The third one is Rejection. In short, I deny that I have a gift. I can live as if I am not a Christian through the week at home or at work or driving on the roads. It is a choice to keep one's faith a secret. I'll say more about that in a minute.

Secrets can be lies to a spouse or a parent, an employer or a best friend. Some might say, "My cat ate my homework." The teacher knows better. Another might say, "I'm just going out on an errand" and it turns into something that was intended differently. A third might say, "I had to work late at the office" when it was time spent with an understanding woman at the bar you started stopping at. A final person might say, "I'm not spending that much on QVC" when it is in the thousands of dollars. The spending is a symptom of a deeper problem that is not resolvable that way. So, at first a secret can be deception of others for the purpose of sin coming from a rebellious heart. That heart may be saying, "I'm going to have to have my way." Or it might be saying, 'I'll show you,' expressing deep-seated anger.

Secondly, a secret may be a default on Jesus' great commission to us. Go, therefore, and disciple all nations, teaching all that I have commanded you.' We are called to be witnesses to Jesus, to what is right in God's sight even when it is unpopular. It doesn't mean to get in people's faces but rather let the Holy Spirit lead them to you. Then, let Him open the door. It might be someone you are concerned about. But you have to pray first, use the John 6 prayer- remember

that, give them to Jesus, ask God to help them to hunger for Jesus, to learn from Him, to confess or affirm Him as Savior. Ask God's Holy Spirit to open the door for you to be part of that if He chooses. He may or may not. But in any case, don't keep Jesus a secret.

Listen to the words of Jesus again from the first 8 verses of our Gospel. It is about deception. *Mark 13:1-8 As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?" Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.*

Those with the gift of discernment are especially needed at this time. When you listen to the TV or radio, whom can you trust? When politicians make promises, whom can you trust? When someone has lied to you or deceived you, it takes time to build trust again. But when do you trust again, test that person's faithfulness. Jesus is trustworthy. God's Spirit in your heart is trustworthy.

The writer of the second lesson for today says, Hebrews 10:22-25 ... *let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

That day is the Day of the Lord. God will come through for us. It often is not in the way we think He should, but in His wisdom, He acts for us and does not make mistakes. He acts for us out of love and mercy. II Chronicles 16:9 says,

*For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the entire earth, to strengthen those whose heart is true to him...*” or another translation says, *“to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”* God is with us all the time. He knows our hearts. We cannot keep secrets from him. Deception is all around us in the world, but as followers of Jesus, Who is the truth, we must seek the truth, speak the truth, and live the truth. Our Savior is the truth. Satan is the father of lies, Jesus tells us. Paul says to the Colossians (3:9-10), *“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to image of its creator.”*

God calls us to faithfulness not only in stewardship of our time and talents, of our spiritual gifts, and of our financial resources, but also of our very heart. Because out of our hearts come relationships to family, to God, and even to ourselves. How we even take physical care of these temporary bodies of ours is stewardship since we are temples of the Holy Spirit. A physician by the name of Dr. Richard Swenson gives a video series called Margin based on his book. The titles of each session remind us of this charge of stewardship: 1) All stressed out and no place to go, 2) Finding time for what matters most, 3) prescription for harried lives, 4) charging your batteries, 5) rebuilding emotional health, 6) enhancing your physical energy, 7) living within your harvest and 8) margin and the sovereignty of God. We focus today however on truth telling so that in the end, instead of us thinking, ‘I’ve got a secret,’ we might say, ‘I’ve got a Savior. He is the way, and the truth and the life.’”

You can share the good news so that others know you are a follower of Jesus. A Bible study guide said, “Some congregations offer members regular opportunities to share an experience of God’s work as part of a worship service. Others ask for specific testimony in stewardship talks, prayer requests, preaching and teaching, anthems, and coming forward for Holy Communion. Our words and actions are testimony when they express our commitment to telling the truth about God and when they create an opportunity for others to affirm and add their witness.” Let us live in the joy of that truth and reach out to others in the great mission field that surrounds us. Seek, speak and live the truth in Jesus’ Name, amen.