

Third Sunday After Pentecost

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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There is this quote that I often see, in various forms, that circulates every so often around the internet. It is “A lie can travel half-way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” This quote has been attributed to various people: Mark Twain, Winston Churchill among others. But the original person was Charles Spurgeon in 1859. Now 1859, can you believe that? That is 150 years ago. 150 years! It seems like this quote could easily describe our present time, right? Although we have this new modern term for lie we would use today: fake news. So a modern upgrade to this quote would be “Fake news can travel half-way around the world while the truth is still composing the first letter of a tweet.”

Now it seems that Jesus in our lesson today was suffering from a rash of fake news being spread about him. Mark says that people were saying that Jesus had gone out of his mind. They were saying that he was crazy. If social media were around during Jesus time, I imagine that the clickbait headline for this would probably be something like “See the career ending video of a religious leader gone completely mad!” or some other outrageous headline. And it would seem that the closest friends and relatives of Jesus would have clicked on this video and then, after viewing it, clicked the “share” button to share to all of their closest 500 friends. At any rate, rumors were spreading about Jesus, and his friends and family were believing this fake news about Jesus.

But can we really blame friends and family of Jesus for believing these reports and not being supportive of Jesus? Because they did in fact have a reason to be concerned about Jesus. At the beginning of this chapter, chapter 3, the religious

authorities are quoted as saying they were plotting to ‘destroy’ Jesus. That sounds pretty serious. And then in our passage today people are saying that Jesus was the devil himself. Wow. Now for all of you parents in here, what would be your response be if you heard that someone had said of your child that they wanted to destroy them? And further, that they are Satan? I would think you might get angry. But I would also think that you would want to protect your offspring. And this is what I see the friends and family of Jesus trying to do. They are trying to protect Jesus. They probably just wanted to talk to Jesus. Maybe they wanted to tell him to tone it down a bit. Maybe lay low. Chill out Jesus.

Now, these are good intentions of the family of Jesus, they certainly are. But it would seem that the family of Jesus didn’t seem to get it. They didn’t really get the message Jesus was spreading. You would think that those who were closest to Jesus, like his family, would completely understand him. But we all know, some from personal experience, that at times families don’t understand each other as best they could.

Now of course, Jesus has something to say in response to all of these things going on around him. Jesus first addresses the fake news about himself. Satan cannot cast out Satan, he says. This would cause division. And something divided can never stand for long. What Jesus is really saying is that we cannot use evil tactics to confront evil. To confront evil, we must use different tactics. These different tactics are good and holy... and look nothing like the tactics used by evil doers.

Jesus next addresses his family. At first he seems to deal harshly with them. He says in verse 34 that those who are sitting around him, which excludes his family, are his real family. His blood is not family, but other people are. Further, his family is those who do the will of God, not those who prevent him from doing it. But Jesus is also saying something else: He is saying to his family: yes, I am your blood relative,

but now, so are all of these people. Jesus wants his family to welcome the crowd gathered into his inner circle. It seems we often misunderstand those closest to us.

There was once a woman who had a falcon she trained very carefully. Day in and day out, for a year, the woman faithfully trained the falcon. It was a splendid bird who was obedient to the master's every command.

One day the woman and her falcon were out on a hike. After a while both became thirsty, so the woman searched for water. She soon found an old spring on the hillside where the water trickled out of the earth a drop at a time. The woman held her cup under the spring and waited until it was nearly full. As she brought the cup to her mouth, the falcon flapped his wings, spilling the water.

The woman scolded the bird and again placed her cup under the spring. She waited a long time until the cup finally filled. When she began to drink a second time, the falcon landed on her wrist, causing the water to spill on the ground. This time she scolded the bird in a louder voice.

When the woman was able to fill her cup a third time the falcon again caused her to spill the water. This time the woman became very angry. She raised her arm preparing to strike the falcon with all of her might. Just then another hiker came upon the woman and her falcon. The hiker quickly glanced at the woman holding the cup, then the falcon, and then the water.

"Stop!" yelled the hiker. "That water is not fit to drink. There is a snake in the spring and it has poisoned the water. If you drink this water you will die."

The woman's anger vanished. "This falcon has saved my life, and in return I was about to kill it," the woman said. She slowly lowered her arm and lovingly stroked the bird.

Jesus tells us that we are to do the will of God. And we know that it looks different than what evil uses. But what exactly does that look like? Let's start with the inclusive tone of the ending of our reading for today passage. Jesus is broadening his

family to mean everyone. This means that everyone is in relationship with everyone else. This means that each of us knows the other, and not just superficially. This means we know the hopes and dreams of fears of those around us. Because at times, not only is there fakes news out there, but there is fake news that we believe about ourselves. These lies about ourselves can eat away at our self-esteem, and self-worth. For some of us, these things can make us feel down and depressed. When we believe the negativity about us, it can lead us to dark places.

It's when a person is in those dark places that I want to them:

“I see you. You are loved. You are valued. God loves you.” It's in these moments that I hope and pray that my words are enough. It's in these moments that I hope and pray being in close relationship is enough. And it's in these moments that I pray.