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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
October 23, 2016
23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Zephaniah 3:14-20; James 5:7-11
Hymns: 742; 743; 361; 50:2 (242:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 10:17-22

¹⁷Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

¹⁸And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

²¹In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. ²²All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Prevailing Ideology

Every day we come face to face with the prevailing ideology of the world. There are so many smart people out there in the world. There are so many fields of scientific endeavor that someone seems to be making a new discovery every day. And the world is impressed. Text books are changed and updated. The way of thinking in this world can even be affected. That is the prevailing ideology and often there is no science behind the thinking at all, it is the appearance of science. Sometimes it's simply a matter of what some influential people want others to think, and so it is put forward as the absolute truth, and the rest of the world is supposed to fall in line. Most of the world does.

Statements whether they be theories of life philosophies, are presented as facts that any "thinking person" would not challenge. This includes things like the world being many billions of years old. The truth, that actually the world was created in six twenty-four hour days only about six thousand years ago is only scoffed at by the world. We are told it reveals the true depth of our ignorance. Or how about the prevailing ideology that for the first six months, well one might just as well go ahead up to nine months of a pregnancy, a human fetus is only a mass of cells without any feelings or rights, including the right to life; after all a woman has the right to control her body and that includes discarding that mass of cells. That intentionally makes a fetus sound more like a tumor than a real human life with a living soul) When one challenges that worldly ideology with real facts about the miracle of human development and the sanctity of life, the world retorts that this only reveals how deep your hatred of women really is. The prevailing ideology of the world declares that all people are good and righteous and the choices made regarding human sexuality are not about morality for this is how God made people. For one to challenge this as a dangerous ignoring of sin and its consequences and attempting to make God the author of sin may result in one being labelled as a bigot. If one professes that God required a sacrifice for sin, and that one's own works of righteousness are not enough to secure life and salvation, one is accused of being hateful and judgmental of other people.

And now in our own country this twisted prevailing ideology has gained a great deal of government support with laws and

regulations being put in place to protect the evil, and suppress the truth with a lie.

And so it goes, and so it has been since the devil first deceived Adam and Eve with his ideology, with his lies and deceit. It was no different in the days of Jesus' ministry. And so perhaps it was a little scary for the 70 disciples whom Jesus had sent out in teams of two to proclaim the message of the coming of the kingdom of God. They were going against the prevailing ideology of the influential and powerful of their day by taking the message of Jesus into their Jewish society. What they discovered was simply amazing:--

THEME: The Gospel of Christ Prevails.

I. Authority of Christ Transmitted to Believers

It would not be surprising that the 70 disciples who Jesus sent out went with some apprehension. Jesus had told them in their instructions that they would meet some resistance and rejection. They would be welcomed by some but not by all. However, any apprehension they experienced before their mission was replaced by joy upon their return.

Luke 10:17-19 Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

¹⁸And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

What they had realized while going about the Lord's business was that Jesus' authority was real, and that Jesus' authority went with them. It is apparent that demon possession was a particular favorite device Satan employed at that time in opposition to Jesus, in an attempt to counter the demonstrations of Jesus' power and authority seen in His miracles and teaching. These seventy disciples were amazed that when they encountered demon possession on their journey the demons were subject to them in connection with Jesus' name. Jesus' power and authority was (and still is) greater than the devil's power.

Don't be deceived into thinking that the devil is not an adversary to be respected, he is far more powerful than we are. He is a master of deception and the father of lies. He even has power to cause us to see things that are not real. However, the devil's power is no match for the authority of Jesus. These disciples went on their way to proclaim the gospel of Christ with the authority of Jesus, and the demons had no choice but to be subject to them also.

Jesus confirmed that as the truth. He who sees all things, He who knows all things saw Satan's dominion take a hit! The gospel was declared to many as these teams of ambassadors for Jesus traveled from town to town. People came to know the gospel, and the reign of Satan in their hearts was brought to an abrupt end as they were freed from the devil's slavery and brought into the household of God! Yes, and that was not to end with the conclusion of this one mission trip. Jesus assured them of His continued blessings and the power of the Lord as they proceeded in life testifying to the wonder of grace that is Christ Jesus. When Jesus referenced serpents and scorpions and how they had authority to trample them down, He wasn't talking about His disciples being safe from creatures in the animal kingdom, but rather serpents and scorpions of a spiritual nature! Paul's comments in his epistle to the Ephesians remind us the nature of our enemy.

Ephesians 6:11-12 "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

We should not underestimate the nature of the enemy or the kind of damage he is capable of inflicting, but we should realize that the authority which Jesus imparts to His disciples, and that includes all believers in Christ, protects us from all the power of the enemy. The devil will not hurt you, that is as long as you depend on Jesus' power and not one's own.

This is true as long as we are going about Jesus' business in our lives, and we are going about Jesus' business in our lives as long as we live to the praise and glory of His name, testifying to his

truth in word and action. Jesus transmits that same authority over the powers of evil with its innate protection to us yet today. And we also need to realize that as His disciples He has given us a mission and has sent us out into the world.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Our authority is derived from His authority. Our message for others is His message and not our own. It is not what **we** think that matters, but what the Word of Christ declares. So we are to learn from the example of the Apostles who saw themselves as ambassadors for Christ and were bold to declare the message of their King. Their focus was always the salvation of those who were caught up in the snare of sin. We read in --

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

On Christ’s behalf we also should implore others whom we know, or even simply encounter in life that they be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. This righteousness of Christ which is ours through faith is not only our greatest treasure but the greatest gift we have to share, which Christ would have us share with others.

The most wondrous of all joys that we possess is --

II. The Believers’ Assurance of Salvation.

Sometimes we can get so caught up in the events of the day that we miss the greater event. Jesus reminded these disciples of the greater joy that filled their hearts.

Luke 10:20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

Of course it was exciting that that the demons were subject to them in Jesus’ name, but there was nothing as wonderful as the assurance of salvation that was theirs in Christ Jesus. They were not to lose sight of that truth as the central truth of the gospel, and their own personal salvation. To know that one’s name is written in

the book of life: to know that God has secured ones' eternal salvation through the merits of Jesus is to know a joy that overwhelms all the disappointments of this life.

It was important for them to stay focused on this truth because physical possession by the devil is not the devil's cruelest trick. Undermining one's conviction of faith is. The devil tries his hardest to misdirect one away from the message of the cross that one might focus on experiences like those which the seventy found so exciting, or emotions that accompany such events suggesting these as signs of certainty of faith. The devil will try to direct one's attention to the works of righteousness one might have done for certainty of faith. The focus of one's faith is not to be on such subjective experiences, but an objective fact established by God written in heaven: Your names are written in the heaven, in the Book of Life. Salvation is assured by God's grace in Christ Jesus.

This is a message for us today. Many distractions have filled the religious scene today. Many agendas have taken precedence over the gospel of Christ and the Lord's agenda of eternal salvation. Even mission trips to Africa or Nepal, or India which can be such thrilling adventures in Christ's service can also become distractions away from our central joy of salvation. As we strive to help with the problems and distresses of this life and when we see such success and deliverance and love extended to others, we can and will feel a real excitement for what is being accomplished outwardly. Never forget that our greatest joy is that our names are written in heaven! That is the greatest objective of all that we do in life for others also, that they might know the joy that is ours, that they might be assured that also their names are written in heaven!

That is the gospel truth that prevails against all the opposition of the devil and the wise of this world. We possess --

III. The Blessed Revelation of God's Truth.

The knowledge and joy of salvation which Jesus saw in the hearts of these disciples filled His own heart with joy and gratitude toward His heavenly Father.

Luke 10:21 “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.’”

No one comes to faith because they are smarter than others. That includes me. It also includes you. God opens hearts to believe through the message preached and the working of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote of this to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 1:18-21 “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

Jesus’ reference to the wise and prudent is a reference to those who are convinced that they know what’s right and good and true because they are so smart, and nobody needs to tell them anything. If it appeals to the intellect and agrees with reason than perhaps it is true, but if it is not in line with human experience and with what we observe in the world or within ourselves than it cannot be true.

The fact is the truth about God and our Savior Jesus Christ is not discovered by the exercise of human intellect. It is revealed to us by God. The Father reveals the Son to whom He will and no one can know the Father apart from the knowing Jesus as the true and eternal Son of God.

The truth of the Gospel prevails! It is not the wisdom of this world that directs our souls to heaven. It is the wisdom that comes to us from God, the wisdom that is found in the foolishness of the message preached, the foolishness of the cross. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He bore our sins on the cross as a sacrifice to God to redeem our souls from death and bring us to

God. This goes against all that the world knows, and yet this is the message that prevails.

By God's grace it not only prevails against the world, but also it has prevailed against our corrupt human nature. By the grace of God the truth of our salvation has been revealed to us and has taken hold of our hearts. **“And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!”** (Matthew 16:18) Praise and thanks to the God of our salvation the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the wonder of grace that has filled our hearts with joy!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)