

November 13, 2022  
The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
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## “Spiritual Warfare”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. Welcome back to True U-Truth University. Today we began the first in a two-part sub-section of our Truth University sermon series dealing with Spiritual Warfare.

Warfare, we hear about it a lot today. Whether it's North Korea shooting off 1000 missiles or something over Japan, or what's going on in Ukraine. In fact, I heard a very interesting thing from Ukraine just the other day. The people in Kyrstan woke up. And then they went outside and they noticed that the Russian tanks were gone. The Russian howitzers were gone? The Russian military leadership was gone and almost all of the troops were gone. It was in the news that this was great news that obviously Russia realized they were losing and we're pulling out and giving up Kyrstan. And then the Ukrainian military commander got on TV and said, well, not so fast. We don't believe that they are giving up. We believe they are trying to deceive us, laying the trap for us. After all, that's how warfare works. And it is, deception is a classic military move.

Consider the Gulf War. Many of you remember that. We were going to war with Iraq. And when it came time to actually fight the battle, we had a single Navy SEAL team fake an amphibious assault on the eastern side of Iraq on the Persian Gulf. They tell them, excellent job because they kept the whole contingent of the Iraqi army tied down and preparing what was obviously a massive assault by the United States Navy and Marines. But it was fake. Meanwhile, over on the southwest border, we had set up plywood tanks, hundreds of them, so that it looked like we were invading from the Southwest. We weren't. We were invading somewhere in between. But that was kept secret, and everything was kept secret so the Iraqis wouldn't know where we were really coming

from. And once we did come there, army would be split in two, we'd have a highway straight into Baghdad and we would win quickly. That's exactly what happened. We deceived them. And it allowed for quick victory. Especially among the Allied forces.

Spiritual warfare and deception, it's a warning that is found throughout the Bible; from the prophets, from Christ Himself to his apostles and the evangelists. Because we are at war, spiritual war. It's not an overstatement. It's not the hyperbole of a pastor. It's the truth. So, let's go to a book that talks about this. It is not something we're pulling off Amazon, it is the last book of the Bible, Revelation. And I know when I say Revelation, some people go, "oh, no, no, no, no, I tried studying that once, and that is way too deep, way too weird; dragons and serpents and beasts and..."

Well first, hold on a second. If we go to the setting of the book of Revelation, it will help us with our understanding. The Apostle John, Jesus's beloved disciple was in prison. It was a prison island run by the Roman Empire. He was there because of his faith in Jesus. And it was while he is there in prison, captive, that Jesus gives him this vision. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ to John. And he gives this vision in a way that the Hebrew people and the modern church who studies God's word would understand. It's done in an Apocalyptic language where everything is figurative. And it's written in that way because when John writes it down and then goes to send it out, the Romans would look at it and go, "serpents, dragons, beasts coming out of the ocean and on the land, this is gibberish," they would allow it to go out so that people would look at and know John was absolutely insane. But he wasn't.

What he was doing is sending a very clear message to God's people. And so, we read in Revelation 12, verse six that Satan and I'm quoting now "Satan, the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the devil, the deceiver of the whole world as thrown down out of heaven." His response? He is ticked off that God cut his coo off and cast him out of heaven. So, he wants to hurt everything that God loves. And what do we read? He, Satan, pursued the woman who had given birth to a male child. Who is this woman? It's God's people, it's Israel. From the very beginning when

Adam and Eve sinned, God made a promise. That the Messiah would come through the seed of the woman, and then beginning with Abraham going through Isaac, going through David, going through Jacob, then Judah, and then Jesse and David. A very particular line of God's people is shown to be the one to whom the Messiah will come. But it's more than just Israel.

Then he (Satan) pursued the woman who had given birth to a male child. Then the Dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on other offspring. And it's the church, God's people. You might say all Pastor Matt, 'that's a stretch, it sure sounds like Israel to me.' No, no, no, Jesus here in this revelation defines who the offspring are: "those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." The modern-day Jew does not hold the testimony of Jesus. Nor does the state of Israel. It is the Church that holds to the testimony of Jesus while living by God's standard statement, taking us back to last week. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy because God is God, and we are to remember that 52 times a year. And as God and creator, He is the one who tells us what is right, what is wrong and how to live. And hold to the testimony of Jesus. If we believe that salvation is through Christ alone, we believe it is the gift of grace that is given to us who believe it is the atoning work of Jesus that has saved us, who believe Jesus is coming back to take us home.

And so, we continue and we hear in the gospel this morning Jesus Himself saying, "see that no one leads you astray." A couple weeks ago we heard about one of Satan's trademarks or trade crafts, Cancel Culture. Today we hear another. He is, I quote Jesus, "the deceiver of the whole world." That's Jesus speaking and what Jesus is saying is consistent with the entire Bible. In Genesis chapter 3, the serpent deceived Eve. "Deception." Go to the prophet Jeremiah 29:8 "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you. And do not listen to the dreams that they dream." How do you know if what the Prophet is saying is true or not; if their dream is real or not? By comparing it to God's word. And if it goes astray from God's word, it's an empty dream.

We go to the New Testament where Saint Paul writes in first Corinthians 6:9-10. We heard it last week, “do not be deceived,” and then he gives a whole list of who will not inherit the Kingdom of heaven. And he goes back to what we had just heard about following God's word and living righteous lives, keeping his commandments. But then in first Corinthians 15:33 he again said to not be deceived. “Bad company ruins good morals.” Don't surround yourself with people who don't have good morals, who don't believe, because they're going to lead you astray. They're going to deceive you. Colossians 2, verse eight. “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ.”

So don't listen to what human tradition says is true, no, look to Christ. Don't listen to the elemental spirits of the world that says it's all about you, no, it's all about Christ. Second Thessalonians 2, verse three says, “Let no one deceive you in any way for that day, Judgment Day, will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.” Before Christ returns, there's going to be a mess in this world. And it would appear that there will be an individual or individuals together who are going to be totally lawless, and lead people astray in open rebellion to God's word. Why that doesn't sound familiar at all today, does it? More on that next week.

First John three, verse 7 “Little children, let no one; I bet you already said it in your mind; deceive you.” “Whoever practices righteousness is righteous as He (that is Jesus) is righteous.” It takes us back to living by God's standards again, as outlined in his word.

And finally, Ephesians 5, verse six, I bet if I asked you what the first four words are to, you'd be able to say it by now. “Let no one deceive.” Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Empty words, their the words of man; Saying “I just think,” Or “science says,” Or “everyone knows,” Or I'll let you fill in the rest. I'm sure you've all heard them.

But here is the real question. Are you ready? Are you ready for this? Do you feel qualified? Or are you even concerned? Are you ready to identify the work of the deceiver of the world and say, "That's Satan's work." And just that thought should strike holy fear in our hearts because we are dealing with what the Son of God says is the deceiver of the whole world. Satan is a master at this. And the thought of it should drive us back to last week. "Remember."

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it only 52 times a year. Remembering, "For in six days, God created the earth and the entire universe. And then He rested. He is God, the Creator. He is the one who is in control, and this is His world." Remember who God is and then like the other seven Sabbaths, the high holy days, remember what God has done. He has prophesied saying who the Messiah would be and He fulfilled those Messianic prophecies through Jesus. He is the miracle worker as we see Jesus raising people from the dead, raising Himself from the dead. As we see, Jesus died, risen, ascended and promising to come back. It is a call to stand firm in our faith, which is founded wholly on God's word.

Some of Satan's deceptions are obvious. They're empty words, empty philosophies. They're easy to see. When we when we see the embracing of gay marriage. It is so obvious from Genesis one that God created, male and female, a fit for each other, and he called Eve wife. God created marriage. It's a God thing, a Bible thing, and not a government thing. It's very easy to look and say the whole gay marriage, transgender marriage, all of that kind of garbage, it is wrong. But it's not always so easy, because there were those who are quote, un-quote "Experts" in the Bible who will use the Bible to try to deceive people. You might say, really, Pastor Matt, people will actually use the Bible? Absolutely. Is that not what Satan when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness? How did he do it? Does not the word say, he used scripture to try to deceive Jesus? And are you ready to deal with the deceiver of the whole world who felt he could deceive even God's Son with the scripture?

This is such a call for God's people in this day and age to understand the climate we are in, to understand that we are in spiritual warfare.

And it is a call for God's people to stand in their faith, which is built on God's word. And it is to understand very clearly the Holy Spirit does not work through osmosis, nor does he work through diffusion. And you might say, Pastor Matt, 'what are you talking about?' Well, so many people seem to think that the Holy Spirit is just gonna have the word of God flow right into us through the waters of our baptism. Osmosis is when water passes through a semi permeable membrane. And brings with it nutrients and stuff like that from the area of high concentration to low concentration using water. That's not how God works it.

Nor does He work through diffusion. Diffusion is when something without the use of water, moves from an area of high concentration to low concentration. You cannot pick up a Bible, hold it to the side of your head and say Holy Spirit diffuse this word into my mind because I don't want to open it and read it. He doesn't work that way! It won't work from a high concentration to a lower concentration. It will stay high concentration in God's word in the Bible. Unless we open that book and give the Holy Spirit something to use, I'm afraid we're gonna be in over our heads when it comes to dealing with the deceiver of the whole world. That's why Jesus says in Luke 12:12 "Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you want to say." And you might say, 'Praise Jesus, there you go, Pastor Matt, right on, the Holy Spirit is gonna give me the words.' But then consider what Jesus says in John 14:26. "He, the Holy Spirit, will bring to your remembrance what to say." What does he bring to your remembrance? God's word? But how do you remember it unless you've already seen it, read it, understood it, and put it in the memory base for Him to pull out?

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this is no joke today. As we look at the world around us, we see it running downhill dangerously fast to the empty words, to the philosophies, to the power structures, to the human beliefs conjured up by men that stand in direct opposition to God's word. We see some in the church embracing these things and then using the Scriptures to support them. And it is the call given to us, to recognize we are at war, spiritual war. We are to stand on God's word and yet remember the words of Saint Peter. "Always be prepared to give a defense

for the hope that you have.” But do it with gentleness, respect. We should be alarmed, yet calm, and under control. We have God’s word. We have read it, studied it, understand it. Then we know the Holy Spirit has something to work with. He brings it to our remembrance, and we will be able to stand, be a light in this dark world and bring glory and honor to our God and be ready for that day.

In our Savior’s name. Amen