



## **Pentecost 10**

**August 13, 2017 – 9:30 a.m.**

**Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor**

**Theme: You're Really Jesus' Disciples—  
If You Hold to His Teaching!**

### **Sermon Text: John 8:31-47 (NIV)**

<sup>31</sup> To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. <sup>32</sup> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

<sup>33</sup> They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup> Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. <sup>37</sup> I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. <sup>38</sup> I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father."

<sup>39</sup> "Abraham is our father," they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham did. <sup>40</sup> As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. <sup>41</sup> You are doing the works of your own father."

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. <sup>43</sup> Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. <sup>44</sup> You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup> Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! <sup>46</sup> Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? <sup>47</sup> Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

**Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)**

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The best lies are slight variations on the truth. Anyone can pick out an obvious counterfeit. The ones closest to reality are the most difficult to detect. So, it is with **“the father of lies.”** He’s only overt when no discerning eyes are around. But the more we discern, the subtler he gets in his perversions of the truth. He will taint the gospel with the slightest of heresies—if we let him. That’s why some of the most deceptive cults have begun with Christianity as their starting point. Martin Luther maintained that **“wherever Christians build a church, the devil erects a chapel inside it.”** The gospel plus a pinch of paganism or a splash of secularism is an appealing formula for **“the liar.”** We must *always* guard against *anything* that modifies the purity and simplicity of the message that Jesus died for our sins and was resurrected for our eternal hope. The Apostle Paul warned the Galatians: **“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! (1:8).**

Jesus has told us to be **“as wise as serpents, but as innocent as doves”** (Matt. 10:16) when it comes to live our faith in this fallen world. St. Paul tells us that he wasn’t **“ignorant of the enemy’s schemes”** (2 Cor. 2:11)—and we shouldn’t be either. In Ephesians chapter 6, the Holy Spirit inspired him to command God’s foot-soldiers: **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”** (v. 10-12). Paul’s original readers would’ve easily recognized the picture he paints of **“the full armor of God.”** Roman foot-soldiers, or “hoplites,” patrolled the streets of Corinth like they did in the Empire’s other major metropolises outfitted in the same garb Paul describes. The very first piece of armor they donned before going on duty or heading into battle was a leather belt, or girdle, to which they buckled the rest of their protective gear.

So, St. Paul writes, **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist”** (v. 14). As He struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane with the burden of mankind’s sins, Jesus’ concern for His disciples of every place and time remained in the forefront of His mind. He prayed to the Father in their behalf—in our behalf: **“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them”**—make them holy—**“by the truth; your word is truth”** (John 17:15-17). For us to take our stand against the devil and his deceitful schemes, we need to be in God’s Word on a regular basis. And that doesn’t mean that we give it short shrift, or read it just to say we’ve read it so we can check it off our “to-do-list.” It means that we approach our study of God’s Word in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to illuminate our understanding of God’s will and purpose for us; vowing to think, say and do what it says even when our sinful nature and Satan scream, **“DON’T!”**

It’s a treacherous world, with deceptions and temptations scattered about like well-hidden land mines, ready to blow our faith in Christ to smithereens! The terrain is difficult. There’s no way for us to navigate it without strict adherence to the map.

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So, it's incumbent upon us to absorb God's Word so that our faith in Christ grows stronger and so that we can discern the lies of Satan, our own willful mind and the corrupt culture that surrounds us. While that's not easy, it's not impossible, for **"with God all things are possible,"** Jesus reminds us (Matt. 19:26). The upshot is, we often refuse to accept the help that's available to us, whether that **"help comes from the Lord"** (Psalm 121:2) or thru those He puts into our lives. We can be so stubborn, so headstrong, so unwilling to admit that we need God's aid or the aid of fellow believers who only have our best interests, and God's best interests for us, at heart. Yet, we get defensive, make excuses for our behavior, lie to make ourselves look better or blame someone else or some stressful situation in a vain effort to exonerate ourselves. But before who? Before God? Fat chance!

The book of Hebrews states: **"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account"** (4:12-13). Let that sink in. Really sink in. Really, really, really sink in. Not only will Satan lie to us about ourselves; he'll lie to us about God. Just as we can count on the fact that any search for fulfillment in something other than God and His gifts is futile, we can count on the fact that the enemy will lie to us about the character of God and His Word. Have you heard him? Has he whispered in your ear what he whispered in Eve's ear: **"Did God really say"** (Gen. 3:1)? "Are you sure you heard Him right?" Eve asserted that God had warned them that if they ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they'd die. Having sown seeds of doubt about God and His Word, Satan quips a blatant lie: **"You will not surely die,"** (3:4) he told Eve with a smirk. She and Adam fell for his lie instead of trusting God and His Word. They bet on the wrong horse. Satan wins; God and man lose . . . or so it seems.

When Jesus' listeners objected to his claim that they weren't true children of Abraham because they didn't do what he did, nor were they acting like God's children, **"Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.'"** Jesus was crystal clear: His preaching, teaching, and miracles gave ample evidence that He truly was God's "Anointed One." Yet most of His countrymen refused to believe the truth of that claim despite the facts.

What more could Jesus say or do to convince them? He would suffer, die and rise again for them too—for all mankind, from the time of Adam until the time He comes again on the earth's Last Day to **"judge the living and the dead"** (1 Pet. 4:5). Friends, don't fall prey to Satan's lies. Don't allow him to sow the seeds of doubt in your heart that are meant to undermine your trust in God and His sacred Word. Satan is out to distort God's image.

He poisons our understanding by inspiring false philosophies, by offering false promises, and even by manipulating the Word of God. He tried it with Jesus, he'll try it with us, time and time and time again. In fact, he won't stop trying until the day we die. He's not so much

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interested in our thoughts and our captivity. He's interested in degrading God's reputation on earth. To that end, he's extremely zealous. We let him get away with it, don't we? Any time we question God's goodness, distort His Word, pursue unbiblical insights or craft our own image of God to suit our own ends we've fallen for his lies.

The world's full of false deities. "God" has become the force, the embodiment of "love" (by man's definition), the philosophical first cause, a distant observer, a psychological crutch and a host of other impersonal, unholy entities. Karl Marx said that it's foolishness for us to live our lives believing in God and serving and worshiping him. He stated: **"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."** Why? Because Satan's a liar and far too often we fall for his lies, hook, line and sinker. The **"father of lies"** has many offspring. Where in this world can we turn for safety? To what bedrock can we anchor to avoid tossing around in the waves of phony lies? Jesus gives us the answer: **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** Jesus is **"the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father"**—no one gets right with God—**"except through [Him]"** (John 14:6)! This truth is a Person. Cling to Him and believe in no one or in nothing else!

If our hearts are empty, they're empty only of God. St. Augustine said, **"Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."** God is the only real substance that can satisfy our deepest cravings for fulfillment. Why do we press on after other things? Because we don't believe Jesus, any more than His original hearers believed Him. We're no different, you and I, by nature. We've bought into the lies of the evil one. Any discontent, any ache, any emptiness should drive us to our knees in hunger for God, which He promises to fulfill. Seek Him in any and every situation; turn from the **"father of lies"** to Jesus, **"the truth"** that **"sets you free."** You won't be disappointed when you do! Then you'll **"really"** be Jesus **"disciples ... [who] hold to [His] teaching."** Amen.

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