

Beware of False Prophets

Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church

*An Independent Lutheran Congregation
"Holding Forth the Word of Life"*

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Eighth Sunday After Trinity August 2, 2020

Pastor Randy Moll 479-233-0081 / Deacon Marty Jackson 479-899-2807
Ron Wellander - Music Director / Lois Wellander - Choir Director
Lee Allen and Wolfgang McKenzie - Acolytes

Prelude and Lighting of the Altar Candles

The congregation is seated and quietly prepares for worship.

Liturgy: LSB 184 *"Divine Service, Setting Three"*

Hymns:

LSB #644 *"The Church's One Foundation"*

LSB #585 *"Lord Jesus Christ, With Us Abide"*

LSB #632 *"O Jesus, Blessed Lord, to Thee"*

LSB #582 *"God's Word Is Our Great Heritage"*

Introit: Psalm 26 A Psalm of David

1 Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: **I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.** 2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; **try my reins and my heart.** 3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: **and I have walked in thy truth.** 4 I have not sat with vain persons, **neither will I go in with dissemblers.** 5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers; **and will not sit with the wicked.** 6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: **so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:** 7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, **and tell of all thy wondrous works.** 8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, **and the place where thine honour dwelleth.** 9 Gather not my soul with sinners, **nor my life with bloody men:** 10 In whose hands is mischief, **and their right hand is full of bribes.** 11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: **redeem me, and be merciful unto me.** 12 My foot standeth in an even place: **in the congregations will I bless the LORD.**

Collect

Grant to us, Lord, the Spirit to think and do always such things as are right, that we, who cannot do anything that is good without You, may be enabled by You to live according to Your will; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Catechism Lesson: The Apostles' Creed (Article 1)

117. Wherein did the divine image consist? In blissful knowledge of God and in perfect righteousness and holiness.

215) Col. 3:10. *Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.*

216) Eph. 4:24. *Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

118. Do we still bear the Image of God? No; it was lost by the fall, and while a beginning is made of its renewal in believers, it will be fully restored only in eternal life.

217) Gen. 5:3. *Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.*

Col. 3:10. Eph. 4:24. See Qu. 117.

218) Ps. 17:15. *I will behold Thy face In righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.*

Old Testament Lesson: Jeremiah 23:16-29

16 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. 17 They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. 18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? 19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20 The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. 21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22 But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my

people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. 23 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? 24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. 25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; 27 Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. 29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

Epistle Lesson: *Acts 20:25-38*

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. 36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, 38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Gospel Lesson: *Matthew 7:15-23*

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Sermon: *"Beware of False Prophets"* Matthew 7:15-23

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We welcome you and pray that you are built up and strengthened in your faith through the hearing of God's Word among us and invite you to join us again. If you would like one of our pastors to call or visit, please speak to him after the service, or call, or contact him by email at pastor@goodshepherdrogers.org. We ask our visitors to fill out a guest information card at the table near the door.

Holy Communion will be administered during our worship today. Since Christ Jesus offers and gives us to partake of His body and blood, given and shed for us upon the cross for the remission of sins, since the Bible calls upon us to examine ourselves before partaking of Christ's Supper and since partaking of the altar is a profession of agreement with the doctrine proclaimed among us, we practice "closed communion" and ask that only communicant members of this congregation who have examined themselves come forward to partake of the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23ff.; 10:16ff.). Any others desiring to commune with us are asked to speak to the pastor about receiving instruction and becoming a member of the congregation by a public profession of faith. Members desiring the Lord's Supper but not comfortable attending services during the COVID-19 pandemic may call Pastor Moll at 479-233-0081 or email him at pastor@goodshepherd-rogers.org and he will arrange a time to bring the Sacrament to them (to the front porch or to a suitable location at members' homes, or at the church when no one else is there).

Upcoming Events: Wednesday Evening Bible Study meets at the church, or online via Google Meet, at 7 p.m. each Wednesday. The link is posted in the church calendar on the church website. For other scheduled events and cancelations, check the church website at <https://goodshepherdrogers.org> and click on the Calendar tab.

Online Services will continue via Facebook Live and recorded YouTube videos each week. Our Sunday bulletin will be emailed to members and made available online. Since our Sunday services at the church use the **Lutheran Service Book** and many of the hymns and the liturgy are subject to copyright protection, we suggest that members and guests order a copy of the hymnal on Amazon or at CPH.org to follow along with hymn verses and the liturgy. If members or guests need assistance in obtaining a copy, please call Pastor Moll at 479-233-0081 or email him at pastor@goodshepherdrogers.org. Copies may also be borrowed from the church.

COVID-19 Precautions — In compliance to a state mandate and a Rogers' city ordinance requiring individuals to wear face coverings when not able to maintain a minimum of 6 feet between family groups at indoor venues, including houses of worship, we ask that those attending services in-person spread out and maintain the required social distancing and wear a face mask when that is not possible. Anyone who is ill and running a fever or presenting symptoms of COVID-19 is asked to refrain from in-person attendance until fever and symptom free for at least 3 days.

Beware of false prophets

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Matthew 7:15-20

It is the responsibility and duty of every Christian to be watchful and on guard against false prophets; for outwardly false prophets may appear to be fine Christian pastors and teachers, but inwardly they are ravening wolves which destroy and scatter God’s flock.

The Apostle Paul, too, warned against such when he said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified”* (Acts 20:28-32).

It will happen. There will be false prophets and false teachers who do not faithfully preach and teach God’s Word. And, they will cause divisions in the church and gain followings for themselves. Instead of building upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets — the Word of God — with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (cf. Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:1-10), they will build on the sands of false doctrine, human understanding and opinion. The end result, of course, is that those who do not love the truth and hold fast to Christ and His Word are deceived by the lies of the devil and robbed of the salvation Christ won for them when He suffered and died on the cross for the sins of all.

The Bible tells us: *“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you”* (1 Cor. 11:19; cf. 2 Thess. 2:3-12).

That is also why Paul wrote to Timothy: *“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim. 3:10-17).

Thus, for the sake of each of our soul’s salvation, Jesus would have us judge those who preach and teach God’s Word to us. Like the believers in Berea, we should search the Scriptures daily to be sure that what we are being taught is in truth God’s unadulterated Word (cf. Acts 17:10-11). If we don’t, we might easily be misled into unbelief or sin.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:16-20: *“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth*

evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

And what is the fruit of a prophet? What does he produce that we might judge? First and foremost, it is his teaching. Thus, we must always compare the teaching of pastors and teachers to the Scriptures, for the Scriptures are the inspired and unerring Word of God.

Isaiah also wrote: *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"* (Isa. 8:20; cf. Jer. 23:16ff.; Deut. 13:1ff.). If a pastor or teacher is not speaking and teaching in full accord with God's unerring Word, he is a false prophet and we ought to flee from him and hear him no more.

What if the error is only a small point here and there? Is it alright to continue to hear such a preacher? Consider how Satan worked in the Garden, causing doubt regarding the fruit of a single tree. Consider that any error and false teaching comes from the devil, the father of lies, and is meant to deceive us and lead us away from Christ and His truth, even if only little by little (cf. John 8:44).

Consider that Jesus, earlier in His Sermon on the Mount, warned against changing the smallest letter or portion of a letter of God's Word (cf. Matt. 5:17-20). If a preacher will not humbly yield to the clear and plain truth of God's Word, he is a false prophet — beware of him, Jesus said, for in the end his errors will tear, divide and scatter the flock like a ravenous wolf. Cf. Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 John 8-11; Titus 3:9-11; Eph. 5:11; Jer. 15:19.

If one added a single drop of a deadly poison to a clear and clean glass of water, would you drink it? I dare say that none of us would; for even if that drop of poison were not enough to kill us, it could still do damage and might over time, if we continued to ingest it, cause our death. So why then would anyone wish to continually expose himself to the deadly poison of error and false teaching? Even if it did not immediately destroy faith, it very well might over time. And, even more importantly, why would any believer and disciple of Christ wish to be unfaithful to His Word in any point? Cf. 1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9.

A preacher and teacher of God's Word must also be judged on the basis of his conduct and manner of life — not that any will be perfect and without sin, but there should be the sincere and earnest purpose to live in accord with God's Word, repent of all sin and error and be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.

Where one lives in continual disregard of God's commandments and in open sin, one would not expect to find the good fruits of faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word and an exemplary life to lead and guide God's flock in the way everlasting.

Thus, our Lord Jesus, who shed His holy and precious blood for the sheep, desires that none of us be misled and deceived by false prophets and be separated from Him. He desires that we all continue in the true and saving faith — revealed to us in God's unadulterated Word. He warns us against false prophets that we might always hear Him and His Word and continue to trust in Him unto life everlasting.

Dear Lord Jesus, Shepherd and Redeemer of our souls, grant that we be not deceived and misled by the many false prophets who have gone out into the world, but hold fast to You and to Your Word unto life everlasting. Amen.