

THE TRUTH COMES FROM THE RISEN ONE

I. He Gives Fair Warning

II. He Establishes *TRUTH*

III. He Rescues Us for Heavenly Glory

Matthew 7:13-23

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020 | PENTECOST

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Old Testament Jeremiah 23:16–24

Psalm Psalm 1

New Testament Romans 8:12–17

Gospel Matthew 7:15–23

COMMUNION

GRANTS PASS

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 8 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

Chief Hymn – ELH 429 Chief of Sinners though I Be

Distribution Hymn – ELH 310 At the Lambs High Feast We Sing

Closing Hymn – ELH 593 On My Heart Imprint Thine Image

MEDFORD

Psalm 1, p. 65

Opening Hymn - CW 531 Christ is Made the Sure Foundation

Hymn of the Day – CW 385 Chief of Sinners Though I Be

Distribution Hymn - CW 141 At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing

Closing Hymn - CW 320 On My Heart Imprint Your Image

Matthew 7:13–23 (CSB)

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. ¹⁴ How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

¹⁵ “Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. ¹⁶ You’ll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So you’ll recognize them by their fruit.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ ²³ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!’”

Dear fellow redeemed: These words come at the end of the Sermon on the mount, and, appropriately, Jesus ends his sermon with a warning. There are three rather sobering scenarios here – taking a road that results in destruction, being deceived by a deadly enemy, and the false prophet expecting our Lord’s welcome on judgment only to be run off as a stranger. All warn about the same thing – eternal alienation from God.

All three have the same thing in common – damning deceit. The first is to take the wrong road, the second to cultivate the wrong tree, and the third to pass off false teachings as the word of the Lord. Again, the first two are metaphors of warning AGAINST false prophets, and the third is a warning TO the false prophets.

Many today meet Jesus words with excuses (I’ll continue the pattern): Who hasn’t taken a wrong turn and ended up on the freeway? How can you expect everyone to me a master gardener? And for the third, how am I supposed to discern true theology from false, true knowledge about God from false? The answer? Because ...

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I. He Gives Fair Warning

Jesus began the sermon with the gospel. He calls you to follow Him, to “repent and believe the good news.” He pictures the way as narrow and difficult, in comparison with the way that leads to destruction. Every person reaches the end of their road someday, whatever path they are on. Every religion (including atheism) teaches what road to take and what lies at the end. Every single person takes one road or another. Can you think of anyone who doesn’t make choices that guide their way through life?

Jesus has called you to follow Him, on this path that leads to eternal life. It is a path of sin and grace, repentance and faith, confession and absolution. It is to repent, to acknowledge our sin, humble ourselves before our Lord, and believe his promise of forgiveness. As Christians,

we hold the worldview of our Lord as the One who made us, redeemed us, and guides us in life. He is our Savior.

But there are many who would lead us into the more “obvious” path. Like wolves in sheep’s clothing, they seem peaceful enough, attractive, harmless. But they will kill you. These are the false prophets. A “prophet” in this context is anybody who seems to teach the underlying truth of all things. It could be Joel Osteen, the Pope, the “bishopess” of the ELCA [the larger “Lutheran” church body]. It could be Bill Nye, the Science guy, or your favorite psychology professor. It could be Carl Sagan or Neil DeGrasse Tyson on “Cosmos.” It could be the helpful Jehovah’s Witness or Mormon neighbors. It doesn’t have to be from a church or an organized faith to claim to teach foundational realities.

But if a wolf looks like a sheep, how do you tell him from a sheep? Jesus continues with the picture of a tree. A bad tree produces bad fruit. An unbeliever produces false teaching, teaching that is contrary to the teaching of Christ.

Ours is the information age. Information, including teaching about fundamental, foundational realities, comes at us like water from a fire hose. People, you must be into the word so that you can compare the incessant din we are subjected to with the truth of God’s word. We are drowning in messages from every side that teach a materialist view of reality, that matter is all that there is.

Up to this point in our text, Jesus has warned US about the right path, and discernment of the truth. Next he tells us about THEM, the false teachers. ²¹ **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”** (To do the will of the father is to be a disciple of Jesus (Matthew 12:48-50, specifically to repent and believe the gospel, Matthew 21:28-32).

You need to know that many of the deceivers are deceived. No doubt the “bishopess” of the ELCA considers herself a Christian. She prays in Jesus’ name. But the fruit she bears reveals her has a false prophet. Her “Bishop-Messages” page consists almost entirely of “progressive” political statements.ⁱ Her church body denies the substitutionary atonement of Christ,ⁱⁱ the key teaching of the Christian faith, that Jesus Christ died to atone for the sins of the world.

Jesus warns, ²² **“On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ ²³ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!’** What could be worse than on judgment day to be greeted, not with recognition, but with condemnation?

II. He Establishes TRUTH

Jesus warns against departing from the narrow path of the truth, so how can we know the truth? This is a serious question because we are bombarded by so many opponents of what Christ teaches.

First, what He teaches is the truth. **“As he was saying these things, many believed in him. Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.””** (John 8:30–32, CSB)

Right after our text, Jesus goes on, **““Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn’t act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The**

rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash.” (Matthew 7:24–27, CSB)

But doesn't every teacher make that claim? Actually, few make the claim that they are the source of truth. As many commented at the time, Christ speaks, not as one repeating the truth, but with authority, as the source of truth. And he should, for the simple reason that He is the Risen One. He is the one who said he would be captured, crucified, dead, and would rise again. And He did. A multitude of eyewitnesses confirmed it. Many died rather than take back their testimony. The living reality of the Christian church, brought into existence by His word, proclaimed by faithful preachers, confirms it.

Other evidence would be the contrast between His guidance and the guidance of the world. Look around you. Who is happier, the person raised in a family, loving and faithful to a spouse, self-controlled, chaste, respectful, honest, and industrious, or the person who is dishonest, conceited, unfaithful, tears apart his family, and has no lasting attachment? Yet the latter is the ideal of the day.

Christ not only teaches the former, but atones for, buys us back from, the destruction of the latter.

III. He Rescues Us for Heavenly Glory

For those who live in repentance and faith, who humble themselves before our Savior and cherish the good news of His redemption, there is life that never ends. The billboards of deceit point to the broad way, the way “everybody else” is going. The yammerings of the false teachers of this world lead to materialism, or a trust in our own righteousness, or to the dictatorship of our own feelings, or the compulsion of the crowd, or the intimidation of the powerful, or the browbeating of the elite.

The word of Christ, the narrow path, leads to heaven. The Risen One gives life beyond what we can imagine. As Paul put it, ***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.”*** (Romans 8:18, CSB) Have you ever thought of how foolish it is to chase after the petty pleasures of this world when the eternal pleasures and joys of heaven await us?

Any beauty here is just a hint of heavenly beauty. Any joy only a hint of heavenly joy. Any peace a hint of heavenly peace. Any love a hint of heavenly love. Any pleasure a hint of heavenly pleasure.

Stay with the true gospel of Christ. Stay on the narrow way.

Amen.

ⁱ <https://elca.org/Resources/Presiding-Bishop-Messages> These are nearly all “progressive” political messages.

ⁱⁱ “A second problem has been raised recently by feminist theologians. The concept of atonement, especially the satisfaction model, connotes that God the Father is a child abuser. If the notion of divine appeasement holds, then our heavenly father needs appeasing just as an earthly alcoholic father needs appeasing. The suffering of Jesus becomes a vindictive act on the part of God. Feminists denounce child abuse and wife abuse on the part of earthly fathers; and they fear that this atonement model sends a destructive message to faithful Christian families.” “The language of sacrifice in the New Testament is metaphorical, not literal. Jesus may have literally been a teacher, but he is metaphorically a sacrificial lamb or a Good Shepherd just as he is metaphorically a victorious warrior.” Theological Brief for PLTS/ITE **Models of Atonement** By Ted Peters. Ted Peters teaches systematic theology at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.