

## **Sermon - 21st Week After Pentecost**

**Text: Hebrews 3:12-19**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### THE ROLE OF EXHORTATION

Three Mondays ago on September 23rd, I was having my evening meal with one of my classmates from Seminary and as we spoke in the line of Chick-fil-a, a man noticed us speaking and said, "I have been questioning my faith recently, are you a priest? It's funny how The Lord must've placed you into my life." We asked him if he would like to sit with us and we could talk about the things that he is struggling with. We began by simply getting to know this man whom we found out was a trucker who has already logged 1 million miles on the road by the young age of 35. He has traveled this country back and forth and has encountered so many people. He grew up in a Baptist church and was baptized, but he fell away from frequently attending church. Yet, now, he was beginning to read the Bible and listening to Joel Osteen and the like on podcasts. Part of our conversation with this trucker was exhortation. He spoke a bit about denominations and feelings and the uncertainty he felt for his salvation. This was a broken man. He needed the Gospel

message right away that He could be certain of His salvation because of Jesus Christ who died and rose victorious from the dead. He replied, “That's refreshing! It just hits different when you speak with a Christian who understands the Word of God.”

Yet, we couldn't leave him questioning those things he had brought up, Joel Osteen and feelings and denominations and the like. Now that he received the Gospel message, Pastor Kaldahl and myself proceeded to speak to him of the dangers of prosperity Gospel which is found in Joel Osteen. For if you cling to a message that says all will be well if you believe hard enough or if pray long enough then you will receive wealth on earth, then you will be utterly disappointed when your life does not prosper.

Our Lord does not promise that we will receive wealth when we believe in Him, nor does He promise that we will have an easy life. Instead, our Lord, Jesus Christ says the Gospel of Matthew chapter 10, **“You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.”** and again in the Gospel of John chapter 16, **“In the world you will have tribulation. But take**

**courage; I have overcome the world!”** and finally in Matthew 5 to conclude the Beatitudes, our Lord teaches us, **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in this way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”** (Mt. 5:10-12) The promise is that you will be hated in the world because of the name of Christ in whom you live and move and have your being as Luke writes in Acts chapter 17.

Do not believe in a prosperity Gospel which says your life will be good and will achieve wealth because you believe. Likewise, we should not rely on feelings or emotions to determine what true worship looks like. Though feelings are good since God created us with them, they also belong to our fallen and corrupted bodies which are not rightly directed to praise God from whom all blessings flow. Instead, our reliance at all times, should be on the words of the Scriptures, for **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for**

**correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 3:16)** Each of us does well when we read these Holy Words and meditate on them daily and take even one verse per day and chew on it as we try to understand what the Lord would teach us or reprove us or correct us or train us in righteousness with that verse.

When, our conversation with the trucker ended I told the trucker, “I will see you again even if it is not on this side of eternity.” Then I said, “Take care!” Today in our sermon text we hear these words for us as well, **“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.”**

Then as a response to how we may take care the epistle writing continues, **“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb 3:12-13)** We are to “Take Care!” even by exhortation of one another. We are not to become angry with those who exhort us either, for they are desiring that you not fall away from the living God by doing an act which comes from an evil and unbelieving heart. Those who do exhort should also be diligent in doing so as quickly as possible because

the epistle writer says **“that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”** Sin is deceitful. It presents a lie as true as if a car dealer were presenting a spotless Ford F-450 Super Duty Diesel pickup truck to you while never acknowledging that it had been in an accident which totaled the vehicle. When we say nothing to acknowledge the deceit of sin, we buy the truck and are hardened. You must speak up, for you children of the truth and children of light. Hebrews 3 continues saying, **“For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”**

Our original confidence is found in the voice of God who does not deceive, but He makes alive bringing about a new creation as He utters from the cross, **“It is finished” in John 19** bringing to our minds Genesis 2:1 which says, **“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished,”** Our Lord Jesus Christ makes all things new and by faith in Him alone, we have life as Luke writes in Acts chapter 4, **“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

Now, we gladly share this salvation message of the death and resurrection of Jesus so that all who believe in Him might not perish but have everlasting life and be raised again on the Last Day.

Let nothing separate you from Christ whether sins which surround you or sins which threaten to deceive you, or temptations or trials or anything else in all the world. Not money or possessions or prosperity. Instead, seek the Lord where He may be found. In the waters of Holy Baptism ushering us into the kingdom of God as we are born again of water and the Spirit being made children of God and members of the One Body of Christ, and again lifting our eyes to the Lord's table, He presents His True Body and Blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Let this blessed Gospel preserve you to the end unto life everlasting as you likewise exhort one another in love lest you be hardened by the deceit of sin. Amen.