

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The habit of preachers today is to address their people as though they were all Christians and just need instruction...men and women are being treated as saved who never knew they were lost.”

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com (blog)

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*Test the Spirits – Is it God’s Word
or a Lie from the Enemy?*

January 28, 2024

Sermon Text: 1 John 4

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor 11:1-15

I believe in God, the Father
Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ,
His only begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy
Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was
buried.

He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose from the
dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God
the Father Almighty;
from there he shall come again to
judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
AMEN.

.....

Rev 20:1-3 Then I saw an angel
coming down from heaven,
holding in his hand the key to the
bottomless pit and a great chain.

(2) And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, (3) and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

Rom 16:18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Eph 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

2Th 2:3 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

1Jn 2:26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

1Jn 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

You will recall in our recent reading of Pilgrim's Progress how Christian, as he traveled to the Celestial City, frequently met liars to worked to deceive him and lead him astray from the path he was to follow. He and Hopeful ended up in the dungeon, imprisoned by the Giant Despair who lied to them and tried to persuade them to kill themselves.

John Bunyan gave us a very accurate picture of our lives in this fallen, evil world – Christians following Christ to glory. We are met with countless deceivers who work tirelessly to lead us away from the Lord Jesus and make shipwreck.

As you can see in these verses we have just read (and there are MANY others), Satan (the father of lies) is always, always, always at work sending his “sons of righteousness” who are actually his

evil minions, to deceive us with his lies. His goal is to destroy our souls, to destroy Christ's church, and to be God himself. He works, through his lies and deceptions to enslave us and ultimately to murder us body and soul.

The Apostle John, in his first letter, warns us of this danger:

1Jn 4:1-6 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

(2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

(4) Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (5) They are from the world; therefore they

speaking from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Don't be Gullible

Let's begin by thinking carefully about this – *do not believe every spirit*. Here is the context:

1Jn 3:19-24 By this **we shall know that we are of the truth** and reassure our heart before him; (20) for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. (21) Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; (22) and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. (23) And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. (24) Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. **And by this**

we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

This little letter, this First Epistle of the Apostle John, is one of the most important books in the Bible for us to know thoroughly. It is a tool given to us by the Lord so that 1) we might have assurance that we really do know Him, and 2) so that we might have a tool to sift truth from lies. *This epistle by itself exposes many, many professing Christians to be false professors.* And the tests it gives are very plain, very black and white.

Sometimes we watch a video blog on Youtube by a young woman who uses a metal detector underwater to find valuables. She has another tool that she can put on, for instance, a ring she finds and it will tell her if the stone is a real diamond or a fake. That is what First John is. It is a series of tests that either exposes the genuine or condemns the counterfeit.

1Jn 3:6-8 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen

him or known him. (7) Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. (8) Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Tests, you see. We are instructed to *test the spirits. Don't believe every spirit. Test the spirits to see if they are from God or not.*

Now, what are these “spirits”? Why does John put it this way? Why doesn't he just say “test the people and their teaching?” Look at it again:

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many **false prophets** have gone out into the world.

Do you see how he equates the “spirits” with “prophets”? We must test the spirits because many *false prophets* have gone out. So

what John is telling us is this:

Anyone claiming to speak for the Lord, claiming to be a teacher of the Lord's truth, claiming thereby to be a 'prophet,' is necessarily speaking by a 'spirit.' That spirit is either the Holy Spirit, or the spirit of antichrist.

1Jn 4:2-3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. **This is the spirit of the antichrist,** which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

This is the great deceptive power of our enemy. That “just the nicest fellow” who stands in the pulpit each Sunday preaching, that pillar of the church member who can recite Scriptures word for word, that woman who leads the women’s ministry in the church – every one of them is speaking and impelled by a spirit. This is the thing:

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We must not apply the test by looking at the externals. Satan and his minions, as we have heard already this morning, can easily appear as “an angel of light,” a “son of righteousness.” No, we must test by the Word of God:

1Jn 2:9-11 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. (10) Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. (11) But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

When I first came to this church over 30 years ago, I was met with hatred immediately. It wasn't me, as I understand it now, it was darkness that hated the light of the

Word of God. The spirit that controlled and prevailed in the church at that time was not the Holy Spirit – and there is only one other option: it was the spirit of antichrist. Now take care that none of us diagnose these things as mere “personality conflicts.” *We do not battle against flesh and blood.* No, the thing is spiritual. And *if the right man had not been on our side, the battle would be losing.* Do you ask who that Man might be? Christ Jesus, it is He! And so Martin Luther knew it well. Satan was behind the Pope, and Satan is always behind these things.

Test the spirits to see if they are from God. MANY false prophets have gone out, energized by the spirit of antichrist. By Satan. And as a result the vast majority of people in so many local churches are deceived, as it was here so long ago. They have been convinced that they are Christians without doubt, that they know the Lord and that He knows them.

I am just about finished reading Ann Rule’s book about the Green River Killer who terrorized the

Seattle area for nearly 20 years. He violated and strangled to death 49 women and most likely far more than that. While he was doing so, primarily back in the 1980’s and ‘90’s, he went through a time when he was “religious.” He would have his Bible at work and spout off Bible verses and preach to his co-workers.

I won’t give him any notoriety by naming him, but the GRK told detectives after he had been finally caught, that he believed if he “just told the truth now and helped recover the bodies of his victims, and if he prayed, he would go to heaven.”

Now, I can tell you confidently, with no doubt at all, that there are myriads of preachers and professing Christians and megapastors and evangelists who will gladly shout “hallelujahs” when they hear this and pronounce this demon led horror of a man, saved. But the GRK is not saved. I will go further. The GRK *cannot be saved.* He is a psychopath, a manipulator, a deceiver, and worse – the people who teach that such a person is

headed for heaven are preaching a false gospel, they are not speaking by the Holy Spirit – but another spirit which is not from God. The GRK is going to hell.

1Jn 3:10-12 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (11) For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. (12) We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

This is what it means, you see, to *test the spirits to see if they are from God or not*. Don't merely look at the person themselves – the Pharisees were “whitewashed” on the outside. Apply the test of the Word of God to what the person is teaching. Apply these tests John gives us *to yourself*.

Think of this, and think on it very, very carefully:

Mat 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ (23) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

MANY. I cannot preach this enough. MANY will say to Him. Understand this:

These many people, these professing Christians, are people who are absolutely confident that they are saved and heaven-bound. I believe Jesus means us to understand this “many” as “most.” Most people in the world today who profess to be Christians – aren't.

It is a sobering truth. These are

“church people.” These are people who had a kind of zeal in “doing” things in the name of the Lord. These are people who are pillars in their churches. They are people who are the busiest in the church.

But they are not born again. The Lord whose name they used over and over, was not the true Lord of Glory. They did not know Him, and He does not know them.

Someone taught them, and they believed, a false gospel. They trusted in themselves and boasted confidently of their works. They even end up boasting when they stand before the Lord. They are awestruck, shocked, dumbfounded, when He speaks those words to them. I never knew you.

We must *test the spirits*. Because, and here is that word again, MANY false prophets have gone out into the world. Satan has sent his servants out and just as he used Judas, so he uses his army of false prophets.

Where do you think that you are

most typically going to find these minions of the devil?

The answer is plain – *in the church*. Many local churches are overrun with these kind – wolves in wool, because their spirits were not tested by God’s Word. Their teaching and their lives were contrary to God’s Word, but no one bothered to test them. As a result, this is the state of such places:

Luk 11:34-36 Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. (35) Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. (36) If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.”

So What Really is the Problem?

When I was in seminary, I had to take a course on 1 Corinthians. But it wasn’t really a course on 1 Corinthians – it was man’s teachings imposed upon 1

Corinthians. The name of the course was something like – *Solving Problems in the Church as seen in 1 Corinthians*. But of course that is not the subject of 1 Corinthians. Rather, the real subject is this:

1Co 2:13-14 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (14) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

THIS is the real problem, you see. Light and darkness. Truth and error. Human wisdom in opposition to the things of the Spirit. Unregenerate people thinking they are Christians but they are not and as a result they regard Christ's Word as foolishness. THERE is the conflict.

But in that course I took, these things were not emphasized. Rather, it had to do with mere

conflicts on a human level. Personalities. How a pastor can employ various methods to create some kind of unity in the church.

But how do you truly, according to God's Word, promote the unity of the Spirit in the church?

You preach and teach the Word of God truthfully by His Spirit, expecting this to create conflict and division until:

1Jn 2:18-20 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. (20) But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

Test the spirits, you see. We do not battle against flesh and blood, but against these spirits of darkness, these powers in high places *and*

they use human beings to work their deceptions among us. That person, Joe, Fred, Janice...is motivated by a spirit. It is either the spirit of this world or the Holy Spirit.

Mat 23:28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

What is the Test?

We don't want to be naïve and simplistic. John says:

1Jn 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

“Oh yes, no problem, Joe, Fred and Janice all say they believe that Jesus has come in the flesh.” Really? *If the test is just limited to a person saying they believe Jesus Christ came into this world and took on human flesh, then why does John continue:*

1Jn 4:5-6 They are from the world;

therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Apparently, confessing that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, that He is indeed the Son of God, *includes much more. It is a kind of digest, condensed statement that includes belief in everything Jesus was and everything Jesus taught.* Because the Apostles taught what Jesus taught them and they said a lot more than just Jesus came in the flesh.

And this is why John goes on to say that a false teacher, a counterfeit Christian, being “of the world” and unconverted, is going to be accepted by his or her kind. The world is going to listen to them. But the world is NOT going to listen to the Word of God as taught by the Prophets and Apostles.

By this we know the Spirit of truth

and the spirit of error.

Inevitably, Joe, Fred and Janice will not be able to stomach the Word of God anymore. They will drift off to another place where they can hear a word that tickles and pleases their ear. They detest with increasing intensity truths such as:

Eph 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

At the same time, Christ's true people will crave to hear it more and more.

TEST the spirits to see if they are from God.

MANY false prophets (and false

Christians) are all around us.

This is the work of the enemy, it is the spirit of antichrist operating to oppose the kingdom of God. If we are to be wise, we must believe and practice these things.