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3:32

### Lies About Salvation

Luke 13:22-30

*I. Salvation is easy and broad.*

*II. Salvation depends on us.*

*III. Salvation is not urgent.*

“And that’s the way it is.” Some of you here this morning remember this saying; you remember its context, you remember who said it day after day and you remember why he said it. Sadly, you may know how different things are today and why it is not said.

America’s anchor-man, Walter Cronkite used that statement to end his nightly newscast on the CBS evening news. Why did he say it? Because the news reported the facts—the truth—and that’s the way it is. Today the world isn’t all interested in facts and truth is it. No. It seems as though today the world is more interested in spin, and personal feeling. What best captures today’s reporting? “We report, you decide.”

Satan has done a wonderful job of blurring the truth and flooding the world is misinformation about the most important of topics: mankind’s salvation. The world is under the bondage of deception. One of the most pernicious lies encountered today is the lie that there is simply no life after death—people are born they live and like other machines they die and fall out of existence. While this is a destructive truth and one that is gaining popularity in the world, most people in the world still do believe in an afterlife, in a human soul.

To these Satan has created and promoted three terrible lies each one like a powerful cord binding one’s mind with falsehood. In today’s short Gospel we have the words of truth of Jesus which cut through all three falsehoods like a sharp knife.

What is very interesting and important for us to note as we examine the lies of the world through the words of Jesus is that these lies are so pernicious and dangerous because unlike most lies—their exact opposite are not true. With most lies the truth is simply the opposite of the lie; not so with these deceptions.

Jesus’ words for us today take place after Jesus began the journey towards Jerusalem where He would die for the sins of the world. At this point in His ministry He was facing greater opposition and the eyes and ears of many turned toward the future, namely the topic of salvation. It is in this context that Jesus is asked: “**Lord, are only a few people going to be**

**saved?**” (verse 23). It is not hard to understand the desire to ask this question. What will it be like before the judgment throne of God?

How does the world answer this question today? The world is under the delusion that if, in the small possibility that there is an afterlife then that it must be good news and something good. Sadly, even large portions of the church which calls itself Christian today has abandoned the concept of judgment and hell. Salvation, eternal life, according to the world must be easy and the road to it must be broad and easily traveled. It is here that we need to be careful because Satan is the father of lies and a master of deception.

It we know that the lie is that salvation is rather easy and broad and not something to get too worried about then is the opposite true? Is salvation something very difficult and so narrowly traveled that very few will be saved? This is not true. What does Jesus say? “**Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.**” (verse 24). Jesus says that the door is narrow and even that many will not be able to enter through it but, Jesus does not say that salvation is difficult nor does Jesus say that only a very few will be saved.

Satan’s lie has a twofold consequence: many in the world either are too lax and hence don’t give eternity or an afterlife much thought or he deceived many who want to avoid this error by being worried and self focused on their salvation and hence live lives with little hope or peace. Either way, Satan scores a victory. Jesus’ teachings overcome both these deceptions.

Jesus teaches that salvation is not something difficult or impossible for man. In fact the Gospel is so simple and so powerful that many reject it as being too simple. Jesus simply promises that everyone who believes in Him and places their trust in Him will be saved. Salvation is believing and trusting in Jesus—nothing more. “**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned.**” (John 3:16-18).

The faithful person is not a person who is uncertain of their salvation and the faithful person is not someone who is not aware of where they stand before God. Right now everyone who has faith in Jesus is saved and they should have no doubt.

Jesus’ words also give encouragement and hope in that they paint a picture of heaven not as a rather empty place of a few people but rather people of every corner, tribe, language and ethnicity around this world. Today Jesus reminds us that: “**People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.**” (verse 29). We have a God who is powerful; we have a God who loves the

world and whose Gospel is creating a vast church who will live and reign with Him forever and ever. This is God's truth.

Why then does Jesus say what He does then: **“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”** (verse 24). If salvation is so easy why won't they be able to enter in? It is because Satan will try everything in his power to get people's attention off of God and Jesus' life and death and to look to themselves. The truth that Jesus tells us today is that people will fail to enter in namely because they *try* to enter in. In other words their trying is based on their own power and effort not on Jesus' life and death on the cross.

There will be many who will live what appear to be active lives, even lives which appear to be righteous and holy lives but lives not in faith in Christ. What does Jesus say some on the outside will say: **“We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.”** (verse 26). None of these will enter heaven because they lacked the one thing necessary: faith. The Bible reminds us that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6) and this is why Jesus considers these people ‘evil.’ **‘I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’** (verse 27).

Satan's lie is especially powerful in this area because if salvation is not dependent upon us and what we do and if it is dependent upon God then why do anything? In fact you can see this mental attitude in the lives of many who call themselves Christian. The simple fact of the matter is that while it is absolutely true that salvation is God's work and not ours we are called to live a life of faith. The same God who tells us in the Bible that, **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,”** (John 6:44) is the same God who in today's reading tells us to **“make every effort to enter through the narrow door.”** What Jesus is telling us here is to take hold of Him, take hold of the Gospel and the truths of God in every facet of life.

Satan is wise enough to know that he cannot deceive everyone with his tricks. Some will certainly realize that Jesus' life and death is the door which opens up everlasting life; they realize from hearing Jesus' simple words that salvation doesn't depend on one's own works or effort but on that of Christ. So what does Satan do? He has another trick to play. Satan does not try to get one to say no to Jesus, he doesn't even try to get one to say no to faith in Jesus; rather Satan tries to get one to say, not yet.

The third most powerful lie and one that captures a lot of people is that salvation is not something urgent, there will always be another day another season another time down the road to make peace with God. How common is it to hear today of people raised in the faith maybe even with a private Christian education, they make their vows of confirmation and then afterwards they take a vacation from God. They are young and there is so much life to live. After I find the person I want to marry—then I will come

back to church. After we have a child and we need a baptism—then we will come back to church. After I get established in my career and get settled in my life—then I will come back to church.

Do some come back? Yes, but many do not. There is always tomorrow, or so they think. The Bible reminds us: **“now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.”** (2 Cor. 6:2). Here too we can find the truth and indeed comfort in the knowledge that the opposite of Satan's lies is not the truth. Satan's lie is that there will always be time for God later; then the opposite is to look only to right now to take hold of the Gospel. This is what God calls us to do—to act now—because we do not know how much longer the world will be around. However we need to note that we do not live in a world governed by chance but rather by God. It can be frightening even spiritually depressing to see loved ones so callous and unresponsive to the Gospel and we can at times even give up on the matter. What God calls us to do however is to not give up and to know that God will never lose those He has predestined. In other words God calls us to have faith in Him and to not stop praying or witnessing or sharing or encouraging our faith but rather to keep doing all of these things because from our earthly perspective we do not know when someone will convert or when someone will come back to church.

What is the proper state of mind? To focus on God and to keep on doing the things He calls us to do.

We are lied to every single day. We live in a world that the Bible tells us, **“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”** (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan is tricky, the lies he gives are lies that also ensnare the believer when he tries to seek the truth. God comforts us with the fact that salvation is easy because Jesus did it all; salvation is available because the Gospel is available, salvation is guaranteed because it rests on the death and resurrection of Jesus, something that can never be undone. God has raised up and will continue to raise up a people for Himself and that is something we participate in as His children. This is the message of Jesus. This is the truth. And that's the way it is. Amen.