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Sunday, January 13, 2013

Sunday Sermon

By Angela Smith, HEAL Coordinator

I have studied the Christian faith for decades. I have read the King James Version, Revised Standard Version, New International Version, and Catholic Catechism texts from cover to cover and on more than one occasion. I have also read the Torah. My goal in these studies is to understand God and the history of the faith of members of my family.

As a result of these years of devoted study and desire to understand the Christian faith, I have reached the following understanding regarding Good (i.e. God) and Evil (i.e. el Diablo).

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John: 14:6, KJV)

My understanding of the above passage is that Jesus represents the way, the truth, and the example (life) human beings are to live by if to live in God's grace.

"But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:21, KJV)

In Jesus' and John's reference to truth, I believe they are using the following definition of truth: "Truth: the property (as of a statement) of being in accord with fact or reality." (Source: Merriam-webster.com) That is my understanding of absolute Truth and what I believe must be Truth as represented in scripture.

"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them." (John 12:36, KJV)

It is my understanding that Jesus embodied the light and while on earth provided an example by which all could come to the Good (i.e.

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God) and reject evil (i.e. el Diablo).

"These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:" (Zechariah 8:16, KJV)

It is my understanding that Jesus' example was to speak the truth and to be truthful in all acts and endeavors.

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12, KJV)

It is my understanding that when Jesus said to follow him, that he was using the following definition of follow: "Follow: to engage in as a calling or way of life." (Source: Merriam-webster.com) So, it is my understanding that living as closely to the way Jesus lived is what Jesus intended for humanity.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19, KJV)

It is my understanding that the light is the light of Truth and that those who conceal wrongdoing and deceive their fellows are definitively evil or committing evil. It is my understanding that failing to come to the light and expose the Truth is by Christian standards, evil.

And, based on the above understanding, I am confused by those who claim to be Christian while living in darkness and using deception to cover up evil deeds. In fact, it seems many claiming to be Christian use fear to silence the Truth and confusion to avoid accountability and justice.

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." (1 Corinthians 14:33, KJV)

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." (James 3:!6, KJV)

Those who deceive and seek to confuse appear to be representatives of evil. And, that is my understanding.

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

And, while it is clear that those Christians serving God live in Truth and follow Jesus' example, it is also apparent that those serving

Lies and causing fear and confusion falsely claim to represent Christianity.

"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." (1 John 2:21, KJV)

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1, KJV)

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (Matthew 7:15, KJV)

"Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart." (Jeremiah 14:14, KJV)

It is clear to me that the founders of Christianity were aware of the exponential proliferation of deceivers who would claim to represent, but, in no way represent Good (i.e. God, Christ, etc.).

There are many such deceivers in the United States today. And, I find it very disheartening that so many who truly desire to do Good (i.e. God's will) are being misled by false prophets who are leading them away from "the truth, the way, and the life."

There are so many examples. Just recently, Jack Schaap, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Hammond, IN plead guilty to having sex with a minor. (Source: http://www.christianpost.com/news/jack-schaap-pleads-guilty-in-teen-sex-case-denies-knowing-act-was-crime-82304/) Schapp claimed he didn't know it was illegal. Whether he knew it was illegal or not, he certainly knew it was immoral. And, he did not immediately repent his actions. He hid it until someone else exposed his secret. And, he repeatedly engaged in this immoral and illegal act.

It is apparent by Schaap's actions that he has never been a follower of Christ. And, if others allow those usurping God's authority to exploit good-hearted people and cover up evil, I think they are living in opposition to Good (i.e. God's will).

For those who proclaim forgiveness is key, I ask you to live in the Truth and hold others to the same standard. Try this mental exercise. It may help. When you are deciding on what action, if any, to take, sit with the idea that it is Judgment Day and that God has called you as a witness to testify before God and act as a juror. Remember that God, in this case is omniscient, omnipresent, and

omnipotent. And, that God knows if you are lying or speaking the Truth. If you allow the sin of Pride to corrupt you, as you want to hide the Truth and hope that God will forgive you because you were obeying a false prophet at the time, how do you think Judgment Day will go for you?

I recommend you treat every moment like Judgment Day and act as if you believe God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. Otherwise, continue to be of the class of people Jesus despised, namely hypocrites and false prophets.

"But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" (Matthew 22:18, KJV)

"For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery." (Job 15:34)

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

Lies, greed, and hypocrisy are not Christian values. And, it is my prayer that those Christians yet to remove the beam from their own eyes (Luke 6:42, KJV) will do so for the Good of the world and reveal the Truth whenever it is found to be hidden.

"All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing." (-Edmund Burke)

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