**Enemies of the Soul: The Devil - 1/19/24**

**39** They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, **40** but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. **41** You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” **42** Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. **43** Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. **44** You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. **45** But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. **46** Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? **47** Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” **John 8:39-47 (ESV)**

*If you are with us for the first time or have no faith background, we are glad you are here. Today’s topic is a sensitive, yet important one… Many of you come from backgrounds all over the place as it pertains to the position we take on the evil that is in our world… Whether you believe in the spiritual (or you believe quite a bit about the spiritual), I hope you will have an open posture and mind towards our topic for today…*

There is this belief in our world and even within the church that everything should just go up and to the right… If we play our cards right, we should be guaranteed profitability, thrive, or, at the very least, see a positive result. <u>The truth:</u> The whole narrative of scripture, especially the very last book of Revelation, is a grand epic about God entering into our story, the human struggle and journey, victory and defeat, rebellion and repentance. It is an up and down battle between good and evil. *The epic concludes with God’s victory in Jesus…*

Today, we are jumping into a passage that reveals to us what Jesus has to say about our 3rd enemy of the soul, **the devil**. If you haven’t been with us… we are in a series called Enemies of the Soul…

<u>Recommended reading:</u>
Live No Lies by JMC
Renovation of the Heart by Dallas Willard
People of the Lie by M. Scott Peck
The Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis

<u>The implications</u>: There is a propensity to fall on the ends of the spectrum of belief about what we would call “the spiritual.” It is a temptation to either believe like the western world that the devil doesn’t exist at all or to believe many wild things about the devil and give him far more credit and power than he deserves. **Or maybe we just have a distorted view like the old Tom & Jerry cartoons where a little red version of yourself is going to pop onto your**

**shoulder…** C.S Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters:* "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

We are going to look at both of these implications, but first, it is important to understand what the devil is according to the scriptures…

Let's look at our passage…

For Jesus:

1. There is a devil (Gk, *diabolos)* = accuser or slanderer
    a. An invisible, real, intelligent force behind the evil we see in the world
    b. **Eph. 6:12 (NIV) -** *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*
    c. <u>It is important for us to acknowledge that there is something more than meets the eye…</u> For Jesus, this was an automatic (He wrestled with Satan in the desert, he acknowledges him here)
    d. I mentioned the ends of the spectrum earlier: both are unhelpful and risky
        i. **Not all conflicts or problems are directly due to some kind of warfare. Some are from the reality of the fact that we have a sin nature and we have chosen to sin and not yield to God.**
            1. Even marriage… just because you had a fight because dishes weren't put away properly doesn't mean you are being spiritually attacked!
        ii. The West's altogether rejection of concepts like the devil can prevent us from becoming people of love because we end up demonizing other people (or groups of people)... **Prevalent w/ the life and mission of MLKJr.***: "To ignore evil is to become an accomplice to it."*
2. His goal is to destroy (a murderer from the beginning; steal, kill, and destroy)
    a. **John 10:10 (ESV)** - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.
3. His primary method is lies (*there are other things, but they are 2nd or 3rd tier*)
    a. Half-truths, deception, accusations

**Much of my insight into this topic for today is influenced by several Biblical scholars and theologians, and one contemporary voice in particular, John Mark Comer.** He says something profound: Often times, "spiritual warfare" and what we heard in Ephesians 6 earlier, is not exactly what we think… He says, "*Jesus sees the fight against the devil as a fight to believe truth over lies."*

*The more we believe lies, the less human we become… the less we know which way is up… the harder it is to untangle and stand on firm footing.*

*Lies that are prevalent to us today:*

1) *God is not absolutely good. Therefore, he cannot be trusted. Your life depends on you and you alone.*
2) *People are the problem. Therefore, they should be demonized.*
3) *I am defined by sin and mistakes. Therefore, I am a failure and have no worth.*

*Truth to combat these lies:*

1) *God is sovereign & just, yet he is also Love. Therefore, he can be trusted with our whole lives.*
2) *Jesus said you love your enemies and bless those who persecute you; Matt. 5:43-45*
3) *The devil is the accuser, Jesus is your advocate. Even while we were sinners, Jesus died for you.*

What lies are pervading your life today?

1) Write down the lie (half-truth, accusation, or deceit) you have come to believe. Then, write down the truth that Jesus is telling you that counters that lie.
2) Combat lies with truth. Meditate on the Scripture daily. Sow it in your heart. Bathe yourself in it!
3) What voices are you allowing to speak into your life? Join a Community Group! THE CHURCH MUST BE A HARBINGER OF TRUTH, HONESTY, TRANSPARENCY AND LOVE!