

## Title: Fighting Satan (Mark 13:1-13)

I was checking the internet for articles on Judgment day because our Gospel lesson for today, speaks about it. There was an article from St. Wikipedia about “List of dates predicted for apocalyptic events.” Since the year 2000 alone, 41 dates have passed. 20 dates are still in the future, 5 supposedly from the bible and 15 are Scientific predictions. In truth, the Bible says, they last days are a secret known by no one. In fact, Jesus is not so concerned about when it happens as much as “what we are to do” when we see it coming.

From our Gospel lesson in Mark 13:2-6 Jesus was warning them about Judgment Day.

<sup>2</sup> "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

Wanting to know more about Judgment day the disciples were curious.

<sup>3</sup> As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup> "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

Jesus warns them

"Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. Then he answers their question by telling the true signs of the end times. <sup>7</sup> When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

We know this as a prophecy about Judgment Day. Ominous words, but they are also words of comfort. For he uses the analogy of a birth. You see for the world, “Judgment day” is a time of suffering. “Judgment day” is the end of the world. but for the Christian, “Judgment day” is not “the end” but rather it is the beginning of the new. Amen.

We are in a battle. The battle is not waged with artillery, but with words, doctrines and faith. as Jesus warns us

"Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many."

The consequences of this battle are not simply physical life or physical death, but rather spiritual life or spiritual death. Anything which lead us TO faith in Christ, leads us TO eternal life. Anything which leads us away from faith in Christ leads us TO eternal damnation. The devil, in particular, is our enemy. The devil seeks our downfall. His artillery is false doctrine. His artillery is lies. His artillery is temptation to sin.

Like the Devil, there are many people who would lead us away from Christ. Christ warned his disciples "Watch out that no one deceives you. in the end times <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. Scripture calls them false prophets. And if we accept their false teachings we will be in trouble. For this reason it is so very important to examine the teachings of the people we listen to. God has given us artillery in this spiritual battle a defense to stand firm against the devil's attacks. God's artillery is His Word... the Bible. His artillery is the truth. His artillery is the Holy Spirit who will keep us strong in the face of temptation. When I teach my Bible classes I always tell people that you must test everything I say to ensure it comes from scriptures, or is consistent with Scripture. If I say something that is not in the bible.... if I say something that is not consistent with the Word of God, it is simply my opinion. And anyone who insists on teaching something contrary to the Word of God.... that person is a false prophet. The Bible warns us to watch out for these false prophets. A false prophet is someone who tries to look like a Christian, but in reality seeks to draw Christians away from God. These people do the work of Satan. You will know them because they speak the words of Satan.

How do we identify a prophet of Satan?? Will the prophet speak with flames coming from his mouth? Will his eyes turn red? Will he have fangs??

Unfortunately, "no." It will NOT be that obvious. However, it won't be that hard either. For you see, the Devil's way of temptation has always been the same since the beginning. When Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, it was Satan, (in the form of the serpent) who lead Eve to sin, to disobey God's command. He did this by questioning the Word of God. The serpent began his temptation with the words.... "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" By leading Eve to question "what God said," the serpent was eventually able to lead Eve into sin. That is Satan's way. He always starts his temptation by saying false things about God's word, by saying things which question God's word. That is Satan's way, and that is also the way of the false prophet, the tool of Satan, the

one who does the work of Satan. They try to lure people away from Christ by denying the Word of God.

Scripture tells us that the road to heaven is narrow. And that there is a wide road, [Matt 7:7] which looks pleasing to the eye and logical to the mind, [Gen 3:6] yet leads to Hell. Jesus warns us about those who would lead us along the wide road... They will look friendly, they will act sincere and they will appear trustworthy. In fact, in the book of Revelation it says we find that there will be many who will speak in God's name, who cast out demons, who perform great miracles. Prophets, who if judged solely by outward miracles, would fool us all. In fact, many people today are drawn into cults lead by false prophets, who are capable of performing seemingly great miracles, who talk like "ones who know the ways of God." But in truth, they are "wolves in sheep's clothing"... who mimic the walk and the talk of the great shepherd himself. Yet, their teachings about the great shepherd are false.

You might think that, with the bible so easily accessible to the public, "How could anyone be lead astray by false prophets?" But they are there. There was a group called Creciendo en Gracia in English I think it means Growing in Grace. Awesome sounding name for a church. However, this one is a major cult..... The leaders name was Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda He claims that he is the Antichrist. But he wants us to believe that, that is a good thing. He claims that the AntiChrist is the next incarnation of Jesus on earth, (He used to have a website 666pressroom but I couldn't find it anymore) Not only that but he has a tremendous prejudice against all organized religion... especially Christian churches... He says God has rejected them. He says that the churches have misinterpreted the bible. Now get this.... To show that he isn't afraid of the church he uses the 666 symbol everywhere. In fact, he and his followers have purposefully marked themselves with the symbol "666" And finally, in 2011 he was supposed to transform into the glorified Jesus, here on Earth. According to Wikipedia.... "de Jesus Miranda" died... on August 8, 2013.... but no resurrection recorded, only a private internment by his family. I do not want to mock the dead, but there is an irony to this, not unexpected, but still ironic. This would be almost funny except for the fact that there are many people who believed in him. It would be hilarious except for the fact that some of the insidious sayings he has left behind, with this followers. And these are scary indeed.

For example, De Jesus says He doesn't believe in sin He doesn't believe in the existence of the Devil and he doesn't believe in the existence of Hell. He says there is no need for forgiveness of sins.... because after Jesus of Nazareth died

and was resurrected, humans can no longer sin in God's eyes. In an TV interview he was asked about things like murder.... "Aren't they sinful in God's eyes?" His answer.... "Things like murder and theft are crimes, but not sins, People are punished for these crimes on earth." "Heaven doesn't have anything to do with your behavior" Did you catch that? Heaven doesn't have anything to do with your behavior. A chilling parody of one of the foundational beliefs of Christendom, that we are saved by grace alone. But "saved by grace" does not in any way imply that God doesn't care how we live on earth. And the most chilling of things which De Jesus says is "Don't look at Jesus of Nazareth" "He is dead." "Look at me." Clearly De Jesus is one of the false prophets spoken of in scripture. Clearly, his words are the words of Satan. De Jesus seeks to draw people away from Christ. Frankly the only truth he has spoken is "He is an antichrist."

Scripture warns us about false prophets. Scripture warns us about people who talk about false Jesus' Scripture tells us that though they may look like real prophets but they are not. In fact, we will know these false prophets by their false teachings. They all have something in common. And this is how we will know them. They try to take your focus off of God. Just like Jose de Jesus... they try take your focus off of the real Jesus Christ. Pretty much any teaching which takes the focus off of God and onto yourself or onto anything else is false teaching. Anything which leads us away from "faith in Christ" is false. Anyone who tries to lead you away from the Christ of the Bible is a false prophet. Simple as that. Simple. Simple to identify. While that is true, we must still continually be on our guard. We must continually be on guard against false prophets, because they crop up everywhere like weeds.

Nonetheless, Praise be to God, we have a weapon against this attack. God's Word! God has given us His word, the Bible, to test the teachings of all prophets, good or bad. This is why it is so important that we each continually study the bible, so that we can test the doctrines we hear. For the word of God will be the test by which we discern the good prophet from the bad. The Word of God will be the test to discern the difference between those who would lead us along the road which leads to life from those who would lead us to death.

And what does the Word of God tells us? As Christians, we take a stand and say that "the wages of sin are death" and that "our original nature is sinful making us deserving of eternal death and separation from God." But,... because God so loved the world He sent his son Jesus Christ to die on a cross to pay the wages of sin to pay for that sinfulness. Because Jesus Christ died for us we received the forgiveness of our sins. Since we have now received God's forgiveness, the sin

which blocked our relationship with God no longer separates us. And we enter into that relationship through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the word of God. This is the good teaching. For it points us to Jesus Christ, and to Christ alone.

Therefore, as Christians, we take a stand and declare that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. *This world is filled with Satan's lies. There are false prophets everywhere, trying to spread Satan's lies to lead others away from Jesus. Our job is to use the word of God, proactively, to go out there, into the world sharing the word of God, to dispel the lies of Satan.* Remember you are in a war against Satan, a life-and-death struggle for your soul and for the souls of every living human being. At your baptism, God put His protective armor on you, covering you from head to toe with His word. Ephesians 6:11-18 calls it the armor of God. He wants you to wear that armor every moment of your life until He calls you home to heaven.

Jesus is the winner. Stay on His side. If temptation causes you to stray into enemy territory, jump back, repent. Our loving God is always there waiting for you, protecting you. Know that nothing not even our own sinfulness and weakness can separate us from His love and protection. God's power is greater than any temptation of Satan. God's sacrifice was greater than any sin. God's love is greater than this world. Amen