

36. Who Is A Liar? *First Sunday After Trinity.*

God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If a man say: I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him. That he who loveth God love his brother also. 1 John 4:16-21

Sanctify us, O Lord, through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth. Amen.

Beloved in Christ:

WE ARE NOT SURPRISED to find from the apostle John a beautiful message of love. He is the one apostle who died a natural death, and who reached the age of about one century. It is said of him that when he was so old he could not walk to the house of God any more, he had men to carry him into the church, and every time before he left that church he would arise just long enough to say, "Little children, love one another." What a beautiful scene! How many people there are this morning who could come to the house of God themselves and they will not, with the strength that God gave them, but John, the apostle of love, allows himself to be carried, and urges others to carry him where he might hear the sweet Word of the living God.

It seems somewhat strange to us when we realize that he was the apostle of love, that Jesus Christ when He called him to the apostleship, should have given him and James the surprising name, Sons of thunder; and yet it is no surprise. The same good kind mother who is filled with love, at times becomes a mother of thunder if things do not go right; and we may not be surprised at all on the Judgment Day, to find out that Jesus, the loving

Master, when He sees that He has finally been rejected, will arise as a Son of thunder.

Nor will it surprise us when we study the history of love more carefully, to find that this loving man, almost a hundred years old, carried into the church, saying to the people as little children that they should love each other, was the very man that above all others called men liars when they refused to tell the truth. In the text of today he uses these memorable words: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." The theme which I wish to dwell upon this morning is this:

Who Is A Liar?

May the Holy Spirit help us to examine ourselves carefully, and if we should find that we are liars, let us by all means, from this day on, strive by God's help, to tell the truth at all times.

I. A Liar Is One Who Does Not Tell The Truth

We would not be fair to the pen of John to tear this text from its connection. A liar is a man who does not always tell the truth. How many people there are who take offense when it is said of them, they are liars; and yet we know that when a man once commits murder he is a murderer. A man does not have to take the life of more than one person to be a murderer; a man does not have to steal more than once to be a thief; a man does not have to steal a horse, or thousands in gold to be a thief; the man who deliberately takes a lead pencil is a thief. The man who once takes the life of any man is a murderer and will be all his life; and I am only telling a God's truth when I say that your preacher is a liar, when I say that you are a liar; for there is not a person in this house today that has never told an untruth, and if you have told one untruth you are a liar. God's Word says. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, and you can break that commandment just as effectually by breaking it once as you can the fifth, which says, Thou shalt not kill. If this hand of mine had ever taken human life I could never escape the fact that I am a murderer; and if this tongue has ever told a thing not exactly true, it has lied, and I am a liar. So you see there are liars just as many as there are human beings.

II. A Liar Says That A Religion Without Christ Is Good

But God forgives sins, and we may look upon the Christian when once forgiven as being now innocent. Therefore, I put the question again: Who is a liar? and on the authority of this chapter I say that he is a liar who says that a religion without Christ in it is good.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-Christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.”

John assures us here that the anti-Christ is not one who stands up and fights Christ, but the anti-Christ is one who gives forth a religion without Jesus in it, and this spirit was to come and was already in existence in the days of John. And that spirit is around us today. There are very few ministers and very few Christians that weigh this point as carefully as they ought. Anything that looks religious to them looks holy; anything that looks like prayer looks Divine; and yet we all know that the devil is just as religious as any man on earth ever was, the only difference being that he is the anti-Christ, and any man who takes part in any worship, it makes no difference where it is, whether in church or a lodge, without Christ in it, is an anti-Christ and fighting the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is establishing that which is opposed to Jesus. Therefore, it only takes a little brain put into active thinking, to see that the world today is full of liars who are holding up a Christless religion.

III. A Liar Pretends To Be A Christian But Does Not Want To Hear His Word

Again, if I ask the question, Who is a liar? I answer, That man is a liar who pretends to be a Christian but does not want to go to God’s house and hear His Word.

“We are of God: He that knoweth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”

John distinctly decides in this verse that he and the apostles were of God. He goes on to say that he knoweth God heareth us. He does not say, goes and hears some one else, or sits at home and doesn't care what he hears. “He that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” How can I decide whether a man is a Christian or not? How can I know, if a man has his name on the church book of the First Lutheran Church, or of any other church, and Sunday after Sunday I never see his face, and at the same time he is able to walk, able to attend to his business? That man is a liar, and all the favor I ask of you today is when you find him on the street, tell him his pastor says he is a liar, and tells him on the authority of God's Holy Word. A man has no right to call himself a child of God and then have no love for God's eternal truth. And we know this from our own experience. I need only to appeal to the Christian people of this congregation to find out the decision. That man who loves Jesus, who loves his salvation through Jesus Christ, who enjoys the communion of the Holy Spirit, that man would no more think of sitting at home on a beautiful Sunday like this, or running out of Sunday School and going home when he might remain here, any more than a hungry, healthy man, would refuse to sit down and enjoy his Sunday dinner. A man physically well wants to eat, and a man spiritually well wants to feed on God's eternal truth. How full the world is of professed Christians who are liars on the very face of the book that gives the record of names that says, I am a Christian, and in all their acts they are lying against God and heaven.

IV. A Liar Says God Is Not Love

A fourth liar is one who says that God is not love. now and then we find people who picture God as a God of wrath. It is not only a fact that God is Almighty, that He is Omniscient, that He is Omnipresent, but it is a fact that God is love. “He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.... And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Wherever we look in nature we see the love of God. Wherever we see a flower we see

that none but a loving God could have made such beautiful flowers. We often hear people say that Christians should not enjoy luxuries. If it were not our privilege to enjoy luxuries, surely God would never have made the thousands of beautiful things that are growing all around us. We could live on bread and water; we could live without the beautiful roses; we could live without all this variety of things that grow and walk around us; we could live without all these beautiful birds. All nature is filled with the voice of the love of God to man, and the poor man has the privilege of enjoying the love of God as well as the rich. Here is a man worth a hundred thousand dollars; he buys a lot and builds a beautiful house, and he enjoys what God has given him. Right beside him lives a poor man, not worth a thousand dollars; he not only enjoys his little yard and his home, but he enjoys his neighbor's home and all the world beside. It is all his. God gave it to him in nature. Beautiful love of God! Pictures of His works.

Not only is God a loving God, as we see in all nature, but He is a loving God as we see in His Word. There is a Spirit of love that breathes throughout this Book from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelation, the whole plan of God to create man in His own image, and when he had fallen, to promise him a Redeemer, and sent forth that Redeemer as a Good Shepherd to lay down His life for the sheep; the whole plan of the Father and the Son sending us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit to fight with us and to remind us of all things the Son had taught; this great missionary plea that goes throughout the Word of God, to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; this call of the Holy Spirit: Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; this wooing love from the cross, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life; this loving call from the mouth of God, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," tell us that God is love.

And this loving God of ours can be trusted. And any man who says that God is not love on account of the Judgment Day, or on account of the lost condition of those who reject Him, is a liar and he knows it. I know there are many things in this world hard for us to describe. If I were to ask an unborn babe to describe the beauty of this world, it simply could not do it; and when I ask the natural man of this world to describe the beauty of heaven, it simply is impossible, and yet we can all see the love of God in

His Providence. Sometimes we seem to think that God is against us; sometimes we seem to think that instead of God being a God of love, He is a God of hatred; sometimes we seem to think He is a God who is fighting us instead of helping us along, but it is only because we are unborn babes in the greatness of God's plans. Oh, if we could see God's Providence as we some time shall see it! Then we would look back and thank God for every obstacle in our way, for every affliction that came upon us. For you and I need every now and then to be troubled. There must something come in the way to make us feel that no difference how high we go, we must come down. A friend of mine a few years ago ran down to the platform for the purpose of flagging the train. It was his object to reach the city at a certain hour, and before he got to the platform the train rushed by. With anger and wrath in his heart he went back, feeling that God was against him. The next morning when he read that just half a mile below that little depot that train plunged into the river and killed nearly all the passengers, he saw that the loving hand of Providence kept him from making that train. The other night in the city of Cleveland, a man tried his best to make the Twentieth Century flier, but just missed it. How he grumbled and murmured against the Providence of God, but when he read the next day how those men were hurled into eternity, he saw the loving Hand that kept him back. And so in the future, when our path of life is over, and we review that sad day of our affliction, when we smarted under the hand of God, then it is that God will show us why it was and how it was; and in heaven and all eternity we will not thank Him half so much for those days of joy and pleasure on earth as we will for those days of affliction, which were the Providence of the God of love.

V. A Liar Says He Is A Christian But Never Feared The Judgment

Who is a liar? That man is a liar who professes to be a child of God and yet claims that he never feared the Judgment.

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.”

The Judgment will be a day of dread, as we sing in that good old hymn. The Judgment will be a day that will make men tremble, and will make some cry out, O ye mountains! fall on us, and ye hills cover us! And yet there is a possibility for men who will tremble at the Judgment Day to get so entirely rid of all fear that they can look forward to that day with perfect pleasure; that they may look forward to that day with boldness, because they shall stand before the Judge with the Judge’s own garment of righteousness on him, and when we have reached the perfection of that love which it is God’s will to give us, then we shall look forward with love and joy to that great day. I do not know that any man has ever been able to picture these three verses of the Bible more lucidly with few words, than the great Bengel. Bengel said of man and of the development of this love, that there are just four stages: The first is no fear and no love. The second is fear and no love. The third is fear and love. And the fourth is no fear and love. You see the growth. There is a time in some men’s lives when they have absolutely no fear of the Judgment and no love in their hearts. The natural man has no love to God and before he thinks at all about the future he has no fear, and he goes through life like the blind ox that goes to the slaughter. Then there comes another period of life when he begins to feel his sins, when he begins to tremble; when his only cry is, O, what shall I do? There is fear and no love. Then he begins to hear of Christ, of the loving Savior; then he still has fear, and love, and that is the third stage. Then he grows. Less fear every day, more love every day, and at last he reaches the stage in life when fear is gone and love is perfect, and he cries out now, No fear and all love. “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.-’ Therefore, a man that says he loved God first is a liar. It is not true. God loved us first, and with His love we learned to love Him and to love our fellowmen. The man that says he can go through these stages and never have any fear of the Judgment at all, is a liar. If you are a Christian today there have been times in your life when you said to yourself. If the

Judgment would come now, what would I do? And yet it is possible for us to have perfect calm in the midst of seeming fear. As an illustration, the wife of a British navy officer went with her husband on a voyage to India. In mid-ocean a terrible storm arose. The officer was calm but his wife was very much frightened and rebuked him for his indifference. He went out and soon came back into the room again with uplifted dagger and seemingly aimed at her bosom. She smiled, and he asked her for an explanation. She replied, "That dagger is not dangerous in your hands." "Nor is this storm," said he, "in my Father's hand." Thus perfect love casteth out fear. ## VI. A Liar Claims To Be A Christian But Hates His Brother

There is another liar mentioned in this text, and that is the one who claims to be a Christian and hates his brother.

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

My dear friends, it is simply impossible for a man to be a Christian and have hatred in his heart toward his fellow Christians. I would not speak of this so much as I do, if I did not feel in my own heart and see with my own eyes that there is so much hatred and so much conflict between those who profess to be children of God. A man that hateth his brother is a murderer. How can a man hate a Christian and be a child of God? If God is love and you have not seen Him, how can you love Him and hate your brother whom you have seen? This may seem like a small argument to some people, but it is a mighty argument. The truth of it is that you only love that best which you have seen. Did you ever try to love some man that you never saw? Did you ever try to love some woman that you never saw? Is there any human being on earth that you dearly love and have never beheld with your eyes? Even the blind man has seen his mother with a vision that cannot be expressed with words. If it is a fact that the objects which we do love in this world are visible objects, it is also a fact that God is love and we shall love Him, and He is invisible. We talk about our love for the invisible God, but how can we love the invisible God if we hate His visible children? If my children were to come into your home, and you had seen my child but had never seen me, and you actually hated my child, I am sure you would not

have very much love for her father, whom you never saw. How can you love me whom you never saw if you hate my children whom you have seen? And yet there are professed Christians in this world that hate this man and hate this woman; will not speak to this man and will not speak to this woman; will not shake hands with this man nor with this woman, and at the same time talk about their love to God. They are liars – downright liars, and in their hearts they know it. And, my friends, love does not simply consist in letting people alone and standing back and letting them run after you. I hear this voice: “I have no particular hatred toward Mr. So-and-so, but I just simply let him alone; I never go after him, speak to him, shake hands with him; never take a step to meet him,” Let me ask you a question, professed Christian. Have you ever gone three steps to shake hands with your pastor? I know some have gone miles, but have you done it? Have you ever taken one step to go to that very neighbor to whom you have not talked for a year? Have you ever gone to him and said, This is no way to live, let us shake hands and be neighborly, and love each other? Just as sure as any person on earth, I do not care who he is, professes to be a child of God, but has no love for this person or that, and is not willing to take the step to speak to him and shake hands with him and show his love, just so sure that man is a liar, and he knows it, and God knows it.

“And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also.”

It is a commandment from heaven. There is no other way to live. And Oh, may God the Holy Spirit teach us all this morning to cultivate a love for truth as we never have before. Let us no more be liars. Let us be so true to our neighbors, to our enemies, to our best friends, that if we find that they say one thing that is not exactly true, we will tell them. Stop your lying. We all need help. There is no one sin in this world any greater than lying. If a man commits adultery we put him down as low, and he is low, but how many people realize that he is just as high as the man that tells an untruth. The sin of breaking one commandment is just as great as the other. Therefore let us aim, not only to keep one commandment, but to keep them all, not because we expect God to save us therefor, but because He has saved us, because He has redeemed us and accepted us in the hands of love and now wants us to walk in His footsteps and to live as children of love. If

Jesus Christ were to stand here this morning and say one word that you knew was not exactly the truth, you would not take Him as your Savior, and yet you and I are to be children of truth. Let us not be liars, but be the children of Him whom we cannot see, and love all His children whom we do see, and therefore, be children of the truth. Amen.

Prayer

O Father in heaven, we thank Thee for this, another privilege of proclaiming Thy everlasting truth to a congregation of those who are striving to come to Thee, and therefore want the plain truth as it is recorded in Thy Word. O Father in heaven, do Thou send Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts and souls this morning with Thy great message, and help each one of us to ask ourselves the question. Am I a child of truth or a child of error? Am I one who loves the truth, or am I one who loves falsehood and practices those things that are loved by Satan? We ask Thee now that Thou wilt help us this morning to take this message home with us and to keep it, and to keep it for the special purpose of living just as near the Master as we possibly can, and may we pray Thee this day to give us such a love for those who hate us, such a love for those who despitefully use us, such a love for those who would injure us if they could, that we may pray for them and reach out our hands to do them a kindness, to walk in Thy ways and to be loved and to love our Father in heaven. Thou knowest how many people in this world have gone to destruction, not only because they have not recognized Thy love to them, but because they have experienced so little love on the part of their fellowmen. Do Thou help us to look out and around us every day that we may find some place to do a little act of kindness to some one, which shall show that we are not void of that love of Him who first loved us. Pour Thy love now into our hearts and souls, while we pray Thine own prayer which Thou hast taught us:

Our Father who art in heaven; Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.