**August 18th 2024 Twelfth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: John 8:37-45** 0733

**Theme: Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics.**

May the truth of God’s Word ever grant unto you the hope of everlasting life in the Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Dear Christians: Whenever and wherever speech exists, there also at the same time exists either truth or lies. When a word is spoken that word is either true or false. It can be no other way. There is no such thing as shades of truth, or true grey areas, though it may seem that way to us. For example the will of God may seem to be a gray area for us, but in actual fact, the will of God in any given situation is anything but a gray area. There is a will of God, though it may not be immediately apparent to us. This is a fact well established throughout time: there is only one truth, and everything else is a lie, maybe not intentionally, but a lie nonetheless. The intentionality of a statement, of a spoken word, holds no bearing on whether something is true or not, and since all untrue statements are in point of fact sinful, then we see that speaking non-truths, whether we know them to be or not, is itself sinful and against what is actually the truth. Mark Twain once said: “There are lies, damned lies, and statistics.” Markl Twain attributed this saying to Disraeli, but whoever coined the phrase was not teaching the deceptive nature of statistics, but rather pointing out the varying degrees and nature of things that are untrue. Twain’s saying serves as our theme for this morning, for the reason that it very aptly sums up our text for today, which is an exchange between our Savior Jesus Christ and the Pharisees.

Now what is it that determines truth? Who can say surely that this is true or that is true? Well the short answer is that God Himself is the arbiter of truth, for He is truth itself. Hear Jesus’ words to His disciples: *“And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.” (John 14:16-17)* We learn a few things from this passage; first God the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, as opposed to lies and deceptions, and so when He speaks He speaks only truth. Second is that truth comforts, for truth brings only life, never death, which idea we will look at more later. And finally the world cannot know Him, neither can they see Him. This is because the world is corrupt and therefore cannot distinguish between truth and lies; they cannot know the truth because they are of the father of lies, the devil, and so know only error, corruption, and sin. It is apparent then that truth is not something inherent within sinful man, nor can it be discovered by those who are filled with sin and corruption, but it must rather be revealed to them. Now to be certain it is of God’s grace alone that any truth is to be found in this earth, for the prince of this world, Satan, is the father of lies, and so the world is ruled by lies, and yet there are little pockets of believers, who have received the truth and dwell therein in joy and in the justification of the sinner through the grace of God in Christ. These little pockets is where the truth can be found in varying degrees, for even in these there are often lies taught alongside the truth. And there is an even smaller group who have the absolute truth, as presented in Scripture, who have the whole truth. Now because we are among those it is imperative that from time to time we stop and remember just how glorious it is that we have the privilege we have, and the responsibility. It is a privilege we should give thanks for each day, and a responsibility to continue in the truth and pass it from one generation to the next. Let us then see, as Mark Twain says: “Lies, damned lies, and statistics.” We will do so according to our text for today which is found in the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to John beginning at verse thirty seven.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, we have gathered together in this Thy house, asking Thee to have mercy upon us. Look not upon our trespasses and sins, but forgive us according to Thy mercy and promise. We thank Thee that our eyes have been enlightened to the Thy truth, the truth of sin unto damnation, and justification unto salvation. Grant us grace that Thy truth continues to be given unto us and to our children for many generations to come. Show unto us today that all lies and deceptions of whatever color they may be are all designed to cause our fall from faith or to keep us living in despair and great shame and vice. We ask that Thou wouldst help us to show the truth unto others. Give us courage not to be afraid of their faces, not to fear what others may think, but by taking courage that we indeed have the truth dwell therein and talk therein. By Thy Word, O Lord, Thy perfect Word, free us from the bondage of those lies that have been proliferated for centuries. Protect us from the death they offer, and rather make us able to see the life Thou hast offered in the truth. Grant, O Lord, Thy grace and mercy and help us according to Thy promises. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn of lies, damned lies, and statistics, seeing first:

1. **Death by lies.** We read verses thirty seven through thirty nine of our text: **read verses here.** The exchange here between Jesus and the Pharisees is somewhat of a culmination, of exchanges coming to a head, wherein the Pharisaical spirit and the Spirit of truth come head to head. The pharisaical spirit is that built upon lies long established, so well established in fact that no one dared to speak against it, and really no one even thought to. The lie it is based on is voiced by the Pharisees themselves when they say: ***“Abraham is our father.”*** This is a very hard lie to uncover, as it was for the people of the day, who never dared to speak against it. For in all actuality their statement is true, but that does not make it truth. They were indeed descendants of Abraham, and if that is all that they were talking about, if they only meant to make a declarative statement about their genes, then it would be true. The lies are in the context, and the spirit behind their statement. For what they were really saying was in effect: ‘We are Abraham’s children, and by virtue of that we are righteous as he was, and we are therefore heaven-bound, for because of our righteousness God must give a place of honor with Him.’ And this was the real thought of the day that pervaded the mind of many of the Jews. It is akin to the thought of many of our day, that my parents are good Christians and so I am covered. God will accept me because my parents were faithful Christians.It is obvious that this is a lie, and that it is a lie perpetuated by Satan himself, for the sole purpose of removing the hope of faith from a person’s heart. Hear Paul’s words concerning the descent from a faithful person: *“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Rom. 2:28-29)* Now these lies are to death of any who dwell therein. This is not a lie which harms no one, if there is such a thing, but it is one which directly to damnation itself, to eternal death. And for that reason we have no choice, as Jesus does, to point it out, so that others do not fall into the same lie. These are lies and damned lies which lead to eternal destruction. Thus we have seen death by lies, let us now turn our attention to:
2. **Death by deception.** We read verses forty through forty five of our text: **read verses here.** Now something that is akin to an outright lie,but is even more dangerous is a lie which is wrapped in something righteous to make it seem as if it is sanctioned, approved, and promoted by God. This is what is being dealt with by Jesus here in our text. It is the same lie as we discussed already, but it is one which was used by Satan to delude many of that day wrapped up to appear as if it is something God actually taught, similar to how statistics are manipulated to say something that may be untrue. Thus, the follow through on the teaching of salvation through generation is that God accepts people based on their race, and will therefore favor that race over all other people, and will cause them to rule here on earth by divine coercion. It was, and is still the thought of the Jew that when the Messiah appears at His first coming that He will establish a Jewish kingdom on earth, wherein the true descendants of Abraham will rule over all others. Even the disciples had that false notion, for they said: *“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”*  You see, this deception is one which is based upon a misinterpretation of the Old Testament, wherein God favors Israel, which is indeed true, because they deserved such favor because of their descent, which is untrue. God gave them a great privilege, but with it came a great responsibility, to continue in the grace of God as His promises said, and to pass that along to future generations. The people of Israel failed to do this largely and so the Gospel passed from the Jews to the Gentiles, but it is the same Gospel, the same faith. This shows first that God’s favor is comprehended not in individual people, but in His own Gospel promises received through faith. And secondly that Christians of whatever race or nation have the same privilege, and the same responsibility. We should recognize this and take seriously what God has given to us, thank Him for it, and train our children in it. We should impart to them the knowledge of what they have, and that it is a gift given, not to those who deserve it because of birth or any other reason, but purely by grace. Further, that lies can take it away, particularly the lie of merit by whom we are descended from. Here we have seen the lies and deceptions which Satan sends forth. Let us now see the opposite:
3. **Life by truth.** We read verse forty five of our text: **read verse here.** The truth is often not kind to those who do not dwell in the truth, and even to those who do. The truth hurts, it digs deep and opens a gaping wound. This is the unfortunate reality for sinful people, for the truth about ourselves is not pleasant, and it cuts us to the quick. It makes us relive things we do not want to think about ever again, it presents to us our most shameful deeds and condemns us for them. I can tell you for certain, that the most difficult part of being a Christian is facing up to the reality of yourself. As you are being prepared to receive the Gospel, the first step is to put directly in front of your face exactly what you are in your very nature. And once you are a Christian it continues to be shown to you so that you do not forget it for your whole life. But it is a necessary work, for once the Law of Truth has done its work, then the Gospel of truth can do its work, and that is to give you comfort in despair, despair wrought by the Law. The truth that Jesus came to sacrifice Himself in payment for our sins, is a truth which frees us. It frees us from the curse of the Law, not the Law itself, it frees us from bondage to sin, and frees us from eternal damnation. It frees us from lies and deceit. It opens our eyes and makes us see. Jesus said earlier in this same chapter: *“If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)* It is the Word which sets us free, because the Word of God is truth. This is declared in one of our symbols, *The Brief Statement,* which says: “Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters.” The Word is not part God’s Word and part man’s Word, but in each and every Word we find the hidden and infallible wisdom of God. Thus it is to be treated with reverence, respect, and humble submission if we are to receive the eternal benefit given therein. We are to avoid treating as did the Pharisees who twisted it to fit their ever-growing lies. Instead a Christian is to be humble and submit to God’s Word as it stands.

Let us then as God’s New Testament people hold fast to the truth as it has been given to us, which truth will protect us from the lies that Satan attempts to undermine us with. Let us be humble and contrite over our sin, and let us be wary of all teaching, especially that which is presented as Christian. Let us weigh it against Scripture and see if it stands the test. This John says in his epistle: *“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)* Compare it, test it, try it. Truth and lies will be made manifest and God will be glorified and His Kingdom of Grace will come. Amen.