

WELCOME 27th September 2020 – 16 Pentecost '20 A

Jude 1:5-16

Welcome again this morning! I'm glad you're here AND I pray you experience God's grace in in abundance this brief time together. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups & other important information about our ministry.

We're continuing with our adapted worship...so as usual there are Group Study/Discussion resources available & maybe already in your hands. *If you're on-line I trust you'll make your way through the songs we've linked to this morning. We're also in the Guide Hall so you're experiencing here what we're experiencing there. Our aim is to equip you so your home becomes a place of the Spirit working leading you & those you've gathered in your homes into the fullness of God's word & his work in your lives & then out into the city to share what God has done for you.*

Remember all the great things we need to do to keep each other as safe as we can in this unending season of "the virus." Hand sanitizer. Masks. Sign in. Distance. We'll clean everything afterwards so you don't have to ;-)

As we move into this week...

Slippery slope... The first small step leading to the next small step ultimately leading to some large perhaps unintended but often foreseeable outcome usually a long way from where the journey started...or where you really ought to be.

For the addict it's the 1st cigarette/drink/bet/_____...maybe it's the 1st glance at a fellow student's exam/homework ...the 1st business deal made w/ inside information...the 1st shortcut in your tax-prep...1st drinks w/ the co-worker not your spouse first small step leading to the next small step ultimately leading to some large outcome a long way from where the journey began...where you really ought to be...

CS Lewis in his essay *The Inner Ring* describes it: "the choice which could lead to scoundrelism will come, when it does, in no very dramatic colours. Obviously bad men, obviously threatening or bribing, will almost certainly *NOT* appear. But over a drink, a cup of coffee, disguised as triviality & sandwiched between two jokes, from (someone) you have been getting to know & hope to know better...It will be the hint of that which the public, the ignorant romantic public would never understand...And you will be drawn in...Then...next week it will be something a little further from the rules, & next year something further still, but all in the jolliest, friendliest spirit. It may end in a crash, a scandal, & penal servitude; it may end in millions, a peerage & giving the prizes at your old school. But *YOU* will be a scoundrel." That's the way the Slippery slope works...

Jude stands at the precipice of that slope & says "Stop...before it starts." Jude passionately declares it is *ALWAYS* the right time & *ALWAYS* the right place to defend the truth of the Gospel. When we're tempted to turn a blind eye...to pretend it's nothing...that it's just a little thing...Maybe there is no better time than right now...no better place than where you live your trust in Jesus every day...because now like always Faith Matters.

We'll explore & experience that together...Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God of our salvation; pour out your Spirit upon us as we gather. By your grace, strengthen us. With your peace, calm our troubled souls. Through your hope mend our broken hearts. You have given us the gift of your salvation through your Son. In humbling himself we are raised to eternal life. Take hold of our hands and lead us deeper into trusting you. Take control of our lips that we might praise you fully & witness boldly to all about your great love. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord...Amen.

Let's sing & then we'll hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Describe a time when you felt compelled to say something to someone about your faith in Jesus?
2. Are there times when it's easier to just "let it go" when someone says something untrue about Christianity?

VIDEO CLIP IMMEDIATELY AFTER FAITH CHAT – "THIS IS WHY" - SET IT UP SO IT MAKES SENSE

BIBLES

17 Pentecost '20 A – FAITH MATTERS: WHAT YOU ARE UP AGAINST

Monday 4th June 2012...We'd had a BIG family weekend of little girl birthday parties...Brenna's & family friends'. I'd had more fairy bread/cake/little hot dogs than a human should ever consume & on the way home from walking the girls to the bus I thought...this indigestion is something else. Leonie & I even laughed about the dangers all that excess indigestion posed. But about 2 songs into chapel over at the Lutheran School...I knew that's no indigestion & the pain shooting down my left arm was not to be ignored or brushed off lightly. So I suggested to Leonie maybe we should visit Emergency. I am glad I did not take that "indigestion/sore arm" lightly...maybe you are too?

Last week, we left Jude with that same sort of indigestion...*Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the faith God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people.* Like weeds that somehow show up in your veggie patch, people who taught contrary to the gospel had insinuated themselves into the fellowship of Christ-followers & were creating enough confusion & dissension that there were signs the whole thing could be in jeopardy...the church was under threat.

In the early church, there were 2 common heresies/false teachings that repeatedly emerged that the apostles & travelling evangelists/preachers had to contend with. 1st was Grace = freedom to sin. We touched on this last week a bit, but it was a simple bad idea: Jesus died/rose to forgive your sin & would forgive all who seek forgiveness so...*GO FOR IT!* I've shared what I think the poet Voltaire said ^{b/4}, "I like to sin. God likes to forgive sin. The world is admirably arranged." That *GO FOR IT* mindset usually played out in 3 ways...\$\$\$, sex, power. Richard Foster wrote a great book 35 years ago w/ that title...about the challenge followers of Jesus still face. It's clear that that heresy still exists in parts of our world ^{w/in} **AND** ^{w/o} the church..."No human realities have greater power to bless or curse. No 3 things have been more sought after or are more in need of a Xn response." For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, & pride in our achievements & possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. – 1 Jn 2:16 Any time you hear someone say, "It's my body. It's my choice. This is just ^{b/t} me & _____. This is my \$\$\$. You can't make an omelet ^{w/o} breaking a few eggs. You'll never get anywhere unless you push..." That's that heresy/false teaching showing it's ugly self.

2nd was Jesus isn't enough...That the authority of Jesus didn't cover all the possible scenarios of life that we experience. That Jesus spoke to a time-bound circumstance & we have grown to learn & know more than he ever could. That other "wise teachers" could offer deeper insights than Jesus. That we needed to add something else to our belief in Jesus. But the church always points to the solid truth: "*I am the way, the truth, & the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*" – Jn 14:6 *With his own blood - not the blood of goats & calves - Christ entered the Most Holy Place **once for all time** & secured our redemption **forever**.* – Heb 9:12 If the perfect sacrifice of God's only Son isn't enough...nothing ever will be. *It is finished* means it is finished. Either *The Son radiates God's own glory & expresses the very character of God, & sustains everything by the mighty power of his Word.* – Heb 1:3 or he doesn't. All authority in heaven & on earth are in Jesus...He is enough. Jude knows the very life/future of the church is at stake because these self-serving self-centered falsehoods have been around forever...Adam & Eve...They're not going to go away on their own. They must be resisted & countered. So Jude, writing to a Jewish-Xn community, reaches into their spiritual/scriptural history to point out the danger of false teaching & what happens to those who reject God's authority, rebel against God's messengers, & live as god for themselves.

Jude grabs 7 stories from Jewish scriptural tradition...Some are straight from the OT 2 are from sources his readers would know very well but we don't...which is why some of this is confusing...weird. I don't want to get lost in the weeds of those stories but they're from books called 1st Enoch & The Testament of Moses. They were not scriptural writings but were built around scriptural & historical traditions Jude's readers would instantly know & understand.

The point for all of this is what Paul would remind the church in Corinth: *These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did...They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age.* - 1 Cor 10:6 & 11 Jude stands at the precipice of that slippery slope & says "*Stop...before it starts.*" So...Jude starts ^{w/} the Exodus & their redemption from slavery in Egypt & their journey toward freedom in the land God promised them. We know, they knew, those freed slaves rebelled (Num 14) almost from day 1 against Moses' leadership & grumbled about the unknown destination & hardships ahead...& for that rebellion & rejection of God's purpose for them, they died in the wilderness: precisely what they feared in contrast to what God had promised. Reject the promise & receive God's justice. It's a warning.

Then he reminds them of angels who rebelled against God's authority & engaged in sexual misconduct (Gen 6 & 1 Enoch) & are locked away until the day of God's final *RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS* in which they will experience God's justice in a painful final way. Jude ties that story to one we all know; the destruction of Sodom/Gomorrah (Gen 19) where sexual rebellion/assault against God's messengers is met with annihilation. He wraps up the 1st 4 warnings from their history ^{w/}

an account from (Testament of Moses) about the devil accusing the dead body of Moses of all sorts of evil deeds & the Archangel Michael defending Moses not w/ counter charges against the devil but w/ the simple *"The Lord rebuke you!"* leaving the devil's final fate in the hands of the Father. This 1st section would've made perfect sense to Jude's readers. These false teachers were rebelling against the clear Word & authority of God, living sexual/moral gratuitousness & rejecting God's messengers or their God-given authority, & **THAT** was a recipe for disaster.

But because the threat is so grave, Jude links 3 more examples...but this time demonstrating the knock-on effect of sin & its impact on others. Cain (Gen 4) not only killed his brother but built a city rife w/ violence & bloodshed...His lifestyle set the culture of a whole city. Balaam (Num 22-25 & 31:16) was prevented by God & his donkey from cursing Israel but instead led them into idolatry, sorcery & sexual corruption. Finally, Korah (Num 16) the Levite who led a rebellion against Moses which led to the death of Korah & about 15K co-conspirators & participants in his treachery. Jesus talked about the overflowing blessing his kingdom brings (yeast, mustard seed Mt 13) What a contrast Jude describes b/t the pain & ultimate judgment of rebels/false teachers vs the joy & life-giving nature of the church that is as Jesus promised *"Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'"*

Jude then piles up more real life images one after another...Hidden reefs destroy a boat from the bottom up. Shepherds are supposed to care for their sheep first, not themselves. Waterless clouds give the appearance of refreshment but always disappoint. Fruit trees that continually bear no fruit or rotten fruit betray the fact that they have no life w/in them. Waves that are uncontrolled wash up tons of debris & cause nothing but damage. Stars out of their alignment spin off into nothingness. That sort of self-absorption in these teachers demonstrates their lack of obedience to Jesus & their ultimate destiny apart from him.

I stumbled across an old hard rock song from my days when I was younger & had more hair...King Nothing by Metallica If you ever thought you'd hear me quote a hard rock band & CS Lewis in the same sermon...every now & then even these guys can point to a truth I'm not sure even they understand...Wish I may, wish I might Have this wish, I wish tonight. I want that star, I want it now I want it all and I don't care how Careful what you wish Careful what you say Careful what you wish you may regret it Careful what you wish you just might get it Then it all crashes down And you break your crown And you point your finger, but there's no one around Just want one thing Just to play the King But the castle's crumbled and you're left with just a name Where's your crown, King Nothing? Where's your crown? Outside of trust & obedience to Christ there is nothing...emptiness & despair...

Jude finishes this section not with more warnings but with an assurance...Whenever we're assailed by falsehood or mockery or attacked for our dogged faith & obedience to Jesus...Despite how destructive, immoral, & rebellious are those who attack or deface the Gospel, & bring Christ & his church into disrepute...Jude speaks forth a prophetic word of authority & certainty: *"Listen! The Lord is coming with countless thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment on the people of the world. He will convict every person of all the ungodly things they have done & for all the insults that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."* God's people will not be tested & tried forever but now can stand assured of God's ultimate victory over all the trials & troublemakers this world can muster.

Jude offers us God's assurance that God has his heart set on you & his eye on all who trouble you. Jesus declared that while in this world we would have trouble, he had already overcome this world...& we share that victory. Christ's Spirit lives in us & his protection, power, provision of all things necessary is guaranteed.

When we're tempted to turn a blind eye...to pretend it's nothing...that it's just a little thing...Maybe there is no better time than right now...no better place than where you live your trust in Jesus every day...Remember you are: called, loved, & kept by Jesus Christ & he alone is our sure word.

Let's pray with that in mind: **Lord Jesus, whatever you ask, whatever it takes, whatever you require of us...More of you, less of me each day. Make your presence real and powerful not for my sake, but for those who do not yet trust your saving love. We pray in your name...Amen.**