

**6 Week Sermon Series**: Recognizing the Line Between Good and Evil

**Sermon 2:** What About the Devil

**Date**: Sunday August 21,2016

**Scripture**: Ephesians 6:10-17

**Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon:**

**Daily Study Guide**

**MONDAY August 22, 2016 Zechariah 3:1-9** “The Adversary’s” accusations refuted The Old Testament and said very little about a cosmic rebel against God called “Satan.” A few books (e.g. Job 1:6-12) mentioned “The Adversary” (Hebrew *ha satan -* a title, not a name). They showed him as an accuser, a prosecutor in God’s celestial council (see Psalm 82:1-4, Psalm 89:6-7, Exodus 15:11). In Zechariah’s vision, God rejected the Adversary’s charges against the high priest, and gave Joshua clean clothes, a sign of divine cleansing and grace.

• This Joshua was the first high priest after Israel returned from exile in Babylon (cf. Ezra 3:2, Haggai 1:1). In this vision, the Adversary said Joshua wasn’t good enough to be high priest. God didn’t challenge the accuser’s facts, but he did rebuke his attitude. Have you ever been like “The Adversary,” eagerly pointing out flaws in others or yourself? What can help you relate more as God did in this vision?

• In the vision, God took away Joshua’s filthy clothes, and gave him clean ones. Then he gave Joshua a call and a responsibility: “If you will walk in my paths, if you will keep my charge, then you will lead my house and guard my courts” (verse 7). Having accepted God’s cleansing grace, how do you go about walking in God’s paths and keeping God’s charge? What motivates you to desire to live as God calls you to live?

**Prayer**: Lord God, I thank you that you are not my accuser, but my Savior. Please guide me today, and give me strength to walk in your paths. Amen.

**TUESDAY August 23, 2016 Matthew 4:1-11** Jesus defeated the devil with God’s word

By Jesus’ day, Israel saw “Satan” (the Hebrew word now used as a name) as the devil, God’s great enemy. The gospel writers told of a defining test between Jesus and Satan. It focused on whether Jesus would use his power for his own benefit, or carry out his mission in humility and service, living out God’s counter-cultural principles. The confrontation was crucial, but it wasn’t close. Jesus won, decisively, using God’s word as his guide.

• Jesus met every temptation with the words of Scripture, even when the devil quoted (or misquoted) the Bible himself (verses 6-7). How many Bible verses or passages have you committed to memory? As you listen to sermons or read, choose some verses or passages to add to that list, so that Jesus can bring them to your mind at times of temptation.

• It was clear that Satan’s evil domain had no power that could stand against Jesus. This battle ended with Jesus’ crisp command, “Go away, Satan” (verse 10). How effective are you in resisting temptation? If just asking the question makes you uneasy, you are not alone. But denial, suppression or unhealthy shame weaken us in the struggle with temptation, and can block God’s power. Get a gifted counselor or pastor to help you look at what’s going on. Facing our inner struggles honestly can actually defuse them!

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, I want to be an effective partner with you as you transform me from the inside out. If I get stuck, give me the courage to seek help to grow more and more like Jesus. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY August 24,2016 Luke 10:17-24** *“I saw Satan fall … like lightning”*

Luke said Jesus sent out 72 disciples to share the good news of God's kingdom and heal (Luke 10:1-16). As they returned, Luke described a side of Jesus we might overlook. The disciples reported God’s power to defeat evil, and Luke said Jesus “overflowed with joy from the Holy Spirit.” Unlike medieval artists or some filmmakers, Jesus never saw the devil as fearsome or overpowering. He understood evil’s power and danger, but was confident that God’s power is much greater than Satan’s.

• Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning … I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you” (verses 18-19). When Luke wrote his gospel, the Roman Empire was killing Christians for their faith. In that setting, what would the promise that “nothing will harm you” mean to Christians? In what ways is that promise, with its timeless implications, meaningful to you today?

• The Message interprets verse 20 as: “The great triumph is not in your authority over evil, but in God’s authority over you and presence with you.” In what ways are you learning to recognize God’s presence with you each day? How, as you accept and submit to God’s authority in your life, might you too see “Satan fall … like lightning”? How can you be what scholar Scot McKnight called “an agent of restoration” for people around you?

**Prayer**: Gracious Jesus, so often I feel as though I’m the one who has fallen. Thank you for your holy joy as you pictured the fall of all that is evil and hurtful. Thank you that your joy welcomes me, and does not condemn. Amen.

**THURSDAY August 25, 2016** **John 3:4-10** *A life directed toward God, not evil*

John’s letter spoke to believers facing the false teaching that some “enlightened” Christians were “above” ways of thinking and behaving the “unenlightened” might need. John said the real division was between those who obeyed God and those who didn’t. He could not have meant the sharp line he drew to say that any slip or sin means you’re not God’s child (cf. 1 John 1:5-10, Romans 7:14-25). He used Greek verb tenses pointing to a person’s overall life direction, not each individual act.

• Presbyterian Pastor Earl Palmer wrote, “John is not saying Christians do not sin. Chapters 1 and 2 have made his teaching on that clear … when we ethically choose to do what is harmful there is a double result: first, the actual harm, and second, our captivity to the way of harm. We become what we do.” In what ways has your life become more free and joyous as God has empowered you to break the grip of evil habits or patterns?

• In verse 9, John used a Greek phrase the Common English Bible translates with the modern term “Those born from God don’t practice sin because God’s DNA remains in them.” In what ways does God’s love and mercy, which drew you to God to begin with, remain with and in you? How does that shape the way you live your life? **Prayer**: Lord God, I desire to steer the course of my life toward you and your kingdom. Journey with me, and keep me on the path that leads to the good life you want me to have. Amen.

**FRIDAY August 26,2016 1 Peter 5:6-11** *Jesus' followers can defeat the devil*

Peter described the devil as a spiritual danger to the unwary. (He may have meant his image of a “roaring lion” to connect the lions some Christians faced in a Roman arena to Satan.) But Peter was also confident that it was possible to “defang” that lion. God, he wrote, will empower us to resist the devil by “standing firm in the faith” (v. 9).

• In what ways do Peter’s phrases about “standing firm in the faith” and remembering “your fellow believers” remind us that the Christian journey is not meant to be made alone? How have other Christians played a role in keeping you honest, accountable and supported in your walk with God?

• At times, churches and preachers have put all the emphasis on the image of the devil being “on the prowl like a roaring lion.” How does Peter’s almost matter-of-fact phrase “Resist him” suggest that he did not mean the image to make us terrified of the devil’s power? How can being “clear-headed” (verse 8) help you be cautious about “toying” with evil, without leading you to exaggerate Satan’s power?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, you offer me freedom and hope. You give me others who can walk this journey with me. You give me strength to resist the tug of evil on my heart. Thank you. Amen.

**SATURDAY August 27, 2016** **Ephesians 6:10-18** *God’s armor equips us to defeat evil*

Ephesians said God gives us the “armor” to defeat evil powers, to push back the darkness. The darkness is real, and it is serious—it ultimately involves the entire cosmos, or as we might say, the very nature of reality. The weapons God’s children receive are spiritual, not physical. The passage said truth, justice, peace, faith, salvation, the “sword” of God’s word and praying “all the time” are keys to success in the battle against evil.

• The city of Ephesus was full of temples to a variety of pagan gods and cults. Paul may have listed so many powers of darkness in verse 12 because, as scholar Clinton Arnold put it, “most of these believers came to the Lord from a background in magic, astrology, witchcraft, goddess worship, and various mystery cults.” What forces in today’s world have made it hardest for you to make, or hold fast to, your commitment to God? Which parts of the armor of God have been most important to you in pushing back the darkness in your own life, and in the lives of others?

**Prayer**: God, sign me up! I want to be “all in” as a citizen of your Kingdom. As I “put on” your armor, empower me to join in your mission to push back the darkness and spread your light. Amen.