

Turning the Tables – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 2 – June 6, 2021

- I. **Mark 3:35** –Jesus said, ³⁵ “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”
- II. **Good and evil have tendency to get mixed up in our world.**
 - a. You might be surprised to read about the family of Jesus thinking He was out of His mind, but it shows that even Jesus’ family had trouble seeing the good He was doing.
 - b. We all know evil exists, but oftentimes we don’t use the Bible – God’s own Word – to identify and reject it.
 - c. The devil is always hard at work to keep us confused, or better yet, to call evil good...
 - d. Consider the many evil things that have not only become a normal part of society, but are accepted and even celebrated
 - i. Last year the leaders of several states passed laws allowing for late term abortions – clapping and cheering for the victory
 - ii. People are getting divorced and having ceremonies of separation to celebrate the break up
 - iii. Children under 10 are increasingly given drugs to prevent puberty so they can change their gender later
 - iv. Riots and looting, assaults and attacks on the government and authorities (from both right- and left-wing supporters) are celebrated as legitimate ways to make wrongs right
 - v. Pornography (with all its exploitation and addiction) is considered perfectly healthy and normal
 - e. You see, confusing good and evil is a role that satan plays, along with the inherent brokenness that’s in every one of us because of sin...
 - i. Adam and Eve in the garden became the first humans to fall for the devil’s lies... and we are personally dealing with the effects of that sin even today
 - f. Make no mistake, satan is hard at work all around us...and if you think 2020 was bad... I’m not sure we’ve seen anything yet
 - i. I don’t say this to scare you, but to give you a sense of hope and peace... because God tells us that the devil will have some success, but the worse it gets the closer the ultimate victory in Christ’s return.
 - g. So, what is a favorite tool of satan as he fights against God, and as God’s children, he fights against us?
 - i. He loves to turn the tables.
 - h. The phrase, “turn the tables” usually means to get the upper hand on someone or some situation... but I would like you to imagine something –
 - i. On one side of the table is GOOD... on the other side is EVIL... and just envision the devil spinning it around
 - ii. Pretty soon, he has us believing that good is evil... and evil is good!

- iii. In this way, satan does get the upper hand (at least for a little while)
- iv. Isaiah 5:20 even says, “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”
 - 1. God has long called out the people who celebrate and push evil as though it were good... but be warned, this kind of celebration only leads to destruction.
 - 2. And isn't it a great irony that Adam and Eve, who ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – in other words, they became aware of brokenness and evil... and yet, rather than being able to discern right from wrong, they / we confuse them!
 - 3. Rather than rightly understanding good and evil, we regularly buy into the lies of satan and confuse the two.

III. **Our reading today is full of different story lines and events.**

- a. First, a big crowd is gathered and gets in the way of a family meal for Jesus... so His family believes He's lost His mind and went to get Him
 - i. Next, Jesus is dealing with Pharisees who accuse Him of being filled with the devil
 - ii. Then Jesus responds in parables about how good and evil don't reside in the same house – Jesus and satan don't work together
 - iii. Finally, Jesus' family returns to the story, and He points out that His real family are all those who do Gods' will.
 - iv. Then He even warns about unforgiveness to those who would reject God by claiming that Jesus is evil – or working with satan.
- b. It's nothing new – because the tactic of all adversaries (which is what the word, satan means) is to change perceptions on what's right or wrong.
 - i. The Pharisees want others to believe that Jesus is doing all these miracles and teaching with authority because He has the power of the evil one.
 - ii. What better way to cast doubt on the person of Jesus than to make people wonder if they were calling evil good? (Am I calling Jesus good when He's really evil??)
- c. So Jesus uses parables, or stories and sayings, that help us know God and what is good.
 - i. The obvious argument is that Jesus is doing real good, so why in the world would satan work against himself?
 - 1. A house divided or kingdom divided does not stand.
 - ii. Secondly, Jesus helps us understand that satan is a strong man guarding or ruling his house, the world.
 - 1. However, Jesus the thief, binds him so his evil and power are limited, and he will not be able to take all people to hell in the end... Jesus will steal people from him
 - iii. Jesus even claims a new family – those who do His will.

IV. **What is the will of God?**

- a. In the 3rd petition of the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Father, Your will be done"
 - i. The Small Catechism says, "God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature..." (it's not all on satan...we are on the hook too)
- b. The devil, the world, and our sinful nature are always calling evil good.
- c. And for those of us who are Christians in our self-righteous walk, we have little room to cast stones at those around us who are celebrating evil
 - i. We get divorces too – and at the same rate as the secular world
 - ii. We condemn gay marriage, but we look the other way when Christian men and women decide to shack up and play marriage
 - iii. We get sad and angry and fearful that Christianity is losing ground in our country, and yet, outsiders look at us and they can only see sadness, anger and fear...but no love!
 - iv. We reject sexual exploitation and pornography... and then we secretly consume it online.
 - v. We claim to be different and have different standards than the world around us, but no one can tell the difference between us and any other unbeliever... because we leave here and act just like all the rest
- d. So it seems that satan gets the upper hand on us...

V. **Yet, the greatest exchange came through Jesus Christ.**

- a. As much as satan will try to exchange good for evil... Jesus went to incredible lengths to take all the evil upon Himself and give us the good.
- b. Listen, I know we can't fully understand how God works, but our sin comes with a price to pay... it is just like any other time we get in trouble with the law or in our relationships – there is a price to pay.
- c. God is so perfect and holy that we could never even be near Him without also being perfect and holy... so someone had to pay the price... Jesus had to bear the burden and weight of it all as He was tortured and executed in our place.
 - i. That was God's great exchange – to take our rebellion, sin and evil... and exchange it for forgiveness, life and salvation.
- d. Jesus turned the tables alright, because just when evil thought it had won the day by "bruising His heel", He rose from the dead in victory over satan just God had promised in the Garden of Eden. (Gen 3:15)
- e. By God's grace the good is now ours, and even more, we are now a true family of believers... doing God's will.
- f. Remember the great exchange and how Jesus turned the tables...
- g. ... and be strengthened by His Word as you celebrate the good – the perfect will of God. Amen.