

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 7, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“A DIFFERENT GOSPEL”

READING: Galatians 1:6-10 – I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

I seldom preach against anyone or any church or denomination, but there is one abomination on cable T.V. that makes me regularly grit my teeth in frustration and anger, and it is something I want to warn you about. The name of the program is “Camp Meeting”. I usually come across it in the early morning when I do a little channel surfing while I’m waiting for ESPN to get through with its seemingly endless commercial breaks.

Evidently this “religious” program uses a stable of preachers who take turns during the week. They seem very sincere. They seem friendly and there’s a lot of Bible waving and lively singing by a choir or a talented singer. There’s usually a small audience of enthusiastic hearers who “amen” and nod a lot. Seems at first blush to be a standard evangelical Christian religious program. It seems so, but it’s not.

As I have listened to them with a discerning ear, I’ve discovered some things that are not only dangerous to the soul, but pagan in their origin. First, I have NEVER heard them say the name of Jesus. They talk a lot about “God”, but it’s always in a very generic kind of reference. They could be talking about any god, but they are definitely not acknowledging the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They appear to be Christian, but never do they talk about the Cross, the Resurrection, or salvation by faith in Christ. Never!

Secondly, the “gospel” that they do preach over and over, day after day, is “Sowing your seed in order to reap your harvest.” The seed they’re talking about is ALWAYS money. The harvest they’re talking about is ALWAYS money. What they preach is that when you show God your faith by sending to their ministry a specific seed (sometimes it’s \$53, often times a thousand, once it was \$13,000), you will activate God’s blessing of the harvest, and he will return to you many times what you have sown. They prey upon the poor, the needy, the desperate, and it’s ALWAYS about money.

Thirdly, they preach almost exclusively out of the Old Testament and ALWAYS from the King James Version. They preach the law, and what they hold out as gospel is no gospel at all. They have nothing to say about forgiveness. They have nothing to say about God’s sacrifice of his Son. They have nothing to say about salvation, victory over death, or life with Christ in eternity. They speak only of the now and the earthly. They speak only of “getting your share of God’s bounty!” All of it is rank paganism: make the gods happy with appropriate sacrifices and pious thoughts, and they will reward you with riches and health. That’s what Baal worship was all about. That’s what Greek myths and Roman incantations sought. That’s what the religion of the world teaches, but that is NOT Christianity. That is NOT the True Gospel.

I tell you this so that you can be discerning and wise. The fact that you’re listening to this devotion means you are a spiritually active and interested child of God. What you need, and what you should always seek, is the true word of God, law and Gospel, but all of it pointing you always to Christ Jesus and his Kingdom.

When you turn on that television or crank up your computer, should you come across a religious program that preaches what “Camp Meeting” does, turn away. It’s not just false, it’s deceiving and deadly.

In our text St. Paul is warning the Galatians of the very same thing. What they had learned first from him was now getting confused by teachings that had nothing to do with Jesus and his grace. Others were putting a twist on the Good News and turning it into something that threatened to steal their joy. St. Paul uses strong words, but he recognizes the danger. Jesus, always Jesus, is the center and the power of the Gospel. Without him there’s no life in us.

So, be on guard. Be wise. Be discerning. When it comes to religious programming, devotions, podcasts, and the like – always listen for what you don’t hear. If you don’t hear Jesus much, if you don’t hear the New Testament much, if you don’t hear about salvation much – turn it off! That’s not the Gospel of Christ, but a different Gospel that’s no gospel at all. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

1) Now that Grace-on-Wednesday is in full swing, we can look forward to another new beginning as we look forward to the resumption of Sunday School on September 12 with an Inter-generational Celebration and regular classes on the 19th. There’ll be something for everyone. Plan to make it part of your life in Christ.