

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity
Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church
Jackson, MI 10-9-2011
Rev. Ross Mahan, Pastor
II Tim. 4:9-10; Deut. 32:39-40; Eph. 3:13-21
Lu. 7:11-17

Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica.

1. Demas was a leader in the early church and a fellow laborer with the Apostle Paul and though the Bible doesn't tell us much about him, whether he was a pastor, missionary, or teacher, we do know that Paul loved him. In Colossians we read: *Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you (Col. 4:14)*. In Philemon Paul greets several people; *Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas my fellow laborers (Vs. 24)*. What happened to Demas? He left his faith and forsook the Apostle Paul and quit the church, why? Paul explained it simply: *He loved this present world*. What it was that actually drew Demas away from Christ we are not told. He reminds us of John's warning to believers: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (I Jn. 2:15-16)*. Every one of us by nature is a slave of Satan, our sinful flesh and the world. *And you hath he quickened, (made alive) who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph 2:1-2)*. Apart from the grace of God in Christ, the world would destroy our faith and draw us away from God. The death of Christ delivered us from the lust and pride of this world and His Spirit preserves us in the true faith.
2. In our epistle lesson Paul prayed for the Ephesians; *That he (God) would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love (Eph. 3:16-17)*. I read two articles in the news this week that troubled me. The first was a story about a Lutheran Pastor from Anniston, Alabama who was leading his congregation out of the ELCA because of their Synod's stand on homosexual clergy, but for some reason this pastor suddenly changed his mind and now is in favor of it. He claims that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that homosexuality in the context of marriage is blessed by God. The second article was about the problems going on in the Nazarene Church. For several years a few Nazarene colleges have been hotbeds for what is known as the Emergent Church movement. This theology denies that the Scriptures are the inerrant, infallible Word of God, denies the doctrine of Hell, and has introduced several pagan religious practices such as prayer labyrinths, Hindu chanting, mystical experiences, and eastern meditation. Some of the professors are teaching Open Theism and Process Theology heresies that are entering their churches among their young people. As I read these articles I asked myself: How do pastors, laymen, and churches end up in this condition? What is it that separates men and women from sound doctrine? I believe there are two errors at the root of it.
I.
3. *Separating the truth of God from His Word*. Men fall into error when they seek the knowledge of God and spiritual reality apart from the written Word of God. God has revealed Himself to man in propositional statements of doctrine that tell us who God is, who we are, what is sin, who Christ is, and how a helpless sinner can be saved. The Christian faith is a revealed religion. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16)*. Man did not create the Word of God on his own that would be impossible but the Bible warns believers of the danger of false doctrine and sin.

Scripture gives several examples of men who fell into sin error, some of them recovered their faith others did not. Paul tells us: *He that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (I Cor. 10:12)*. When men seek for God in their emotions, experience, or human reason instead of the clear Word of God they fall into error and if they don't repent, eventually depart from the faith. Luther wrote: *In the temporal affairs of human beings in the kingdom of earth, the rational man is self sufficient. But in the eternal issues of life in the kingdom of Heaven, nature is absolutely stone blind and human reason is completely incompetent. God is not subject to reason and syllogisms but to the Word of God and faith.* Unless the Lord opens our eyes and ears through the means of grace and preserves us in the true faith, we will fall away. Many Christians do not realize the real and present danger of trying to find God apart from the doctrines of His Word.

4. Every heretic in church history has sought divine truth apart from the clear Word of God. Open Theism denies the omniscience of God. According to this theology God does not know the future; the future is as unknowable to God as it is to us. They also teach that God has given man an absolutely free will to choose what course he will take in life. In this theology God makes mistakes from time to time since He doesn't know everything but thankfully, He is a God who is willing to take risks and adapt Himself to man's free choices. According to them, unlike the God of historic Christianity, the God of Open Theism is open, involved, loving, interacting, and caring for humanity. Open Theism is contrary to the Word of God which tells us that God knows all things including every detail of the future. He knows the end from the beginning and nothing happens apart from His Sovereign will. *He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. God is greater than our hearts and knows all things (I Jn. 3:20). Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite (Ps. 147:5).* The true God is loving, involved and condescends to our level to interact with us in ways we can understand. Christ came into the world to reveal the True God to man and to lay down His life as a ransom for sinners. In Process theology God, the universe, man, and truth are continually changing, evolving, and progressing. This teaching is built on an Evolutionary model the idea that mankind is progressing and growing more enlightened over time.
5. They teach that man, knowledge, religion, and society are continually changing. By the way, this is the foundation for Black Liberation Theology; what Rev. Jeremiah Wright teaches in his church in Chicago, and is the reason why Obama is always talking about Change and transforming America. Process Theologians deny that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh therefore mankind has no need for salvation but as man grows and matures he will become what God intends. This is how the church arrives at the place where what was once considered sinful is now pleasing to God. For example, the church at one time refused to ordain women to the ministry but now women are accepted. What happened? God's Word progressed as we grew in understanding. Abortion used to be a crime but now it is a woman's right. Sodomy was illegal but now it is an alternative lifestyle equal to traditional marriage. Christ was the only way to heaven, but now every religion is equal. We could go on and on listing the theological changes that have taken place in the churches because in their mind the Christian faith is evolving. We have progressed, matured and have a new understanding of God's Word. What does the Bible say? God is eternal. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. (Ps. 90:2)* and God is unchanging. *For I am the LORD, I change not; (Mal. 3:6)*. When men seek for divine truth apart from the written Word of God they will depart from God.

II.

6. *Separating the love of God from His Law.* The love of God is a Holy love in keeping with His Law. Our salvation in Christ is according to the Law of God. Sin is the transgression of the moral Law and by nature we are all Law breakers. God does not love sinners apart from His Law. He loves sinners in Christ because His Son kept the Law perfectly in our behalf and laid down His

life as the payment for the penalty of the Law, which was death. The Redemption of Christ earned the grace of God for sinners according to the Law. Grace is never lawless. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (I Jn. 2:1-2). Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24).* The Law of God is sometimes difficult for us to hear, but His Law is an expression of His mercy and grace, for it shows us our sins and leads us to our Savior that we might be saved. The Law is a mirror to shows us our true condition and our school master to lead us to Christ and justification by faith. The Law will often make you uncomfortable; that is the sign of a good sermon. The curse of the church today is feel good preaching and worship. Contemporary worship has one goal and that is to make people feel good, to lift their spirits, and increase self esteem. But the most loving thing you can do for anyone is to give them God's Law and lovingly tell the unbeliever he is a sinner and that the wages of sin is death.

7. They might not want to hear the Law in fact, they may hate you for saying it, but the Christian has no other option. Speaking God's Word IS confessing the Lord Jesus Christ. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven (Mt. 10:32-33).* Don't worry, God will strengthen you, and give you words to speak, but you must still speak for the Lord and take the heat for it. In the modern church the Law of God is contrary to His love and since it is so pleasant to speak about God's love, grace, and blessing the church neglects the Law. Or if they mention sin at all they will talk about sins that are not a problem in their congregation, sins like abortion, devil worship, or robbing banks; but what about the sin of gossip? The sin of slandering other people behind their back? Or when we refuse to forgive someone and hold a grudge against him in our heart? How about the sin of pride that refuses to be teachable and submit to the clear Word of God? Or the sin of rebellion that refuses to honor and recognize God ordained authority in your life? Do you know what God thinks about rebellion? When King Saul rebelled against the Word of God through Samuel the prophet and assumed the office of the priesthood in violation of God's Law, and spared the life of the King of Amalek and took for himself the spoils of war contrary to God's Word, this is what Samuel said to him.
 8. *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king (I Sam. 15:22-23).* In the eyes of God rebellion against God ordained authority on the earth is on the same level as devil worship. Strong words indeed, but what Samuel said was really an expression of God's love for Saul. Yes, Saul had sinned and was going to suffer the temporal consequences of his rebellion, but Saul needed to see his sins and seek forgiveness from the Lord but he would not. Because Saul refused to listen to the Word of God he went from bad to worse. His pride and rebellion led him further away from God's Word; his heart was filled with murderous rage against David and finally he sought for help from a witch. His rebellion against God's Law led to the actual sin of witchcraft just as Samuel had described it. Later Saul committed suicide. Sin leads to misery and death! The wages of sin is death, eternal death in Hell. When the Church refuses to speak God's Law to its people they are not showing love for anyone, they are manifesting the deepest hatred imaginable. God knows our sinful condition. This is why He sent His Son to die a painful violent death on the cross to atone for our sins and to reconcile us to God.
 9. Because Jesus fulfilled the Law in our stead God is able to show His grace and love to sinners. Whatever happened to Demas? We don't know, the Bible doesn't say. Perhaps he repented and

came back to the Lord; I hope he did. But I asked myself, how did the world draw him away from Christ? Perhaps Demas was like many modern Christians who desire the approval of the world. They want to be liked and accepted. This attitude is motivating many churches today the desire to be praised as enlightened and progressive. But trust me in the things of God you don't want the world's approval. The world is no friend of grace. The world hates the Lord Jesus Christ today just as they did 2000 years ago. The heart of man has not changed, progressed, or evolved; he is the same sinner today as he has always been and he still needs to be saved. Do not imagine you cannot be drawn away from the pure Word of God. God preserves us in the true faith through the means of grace. He grants us repentance and saving faith through the hearing of His Word and the Lord expects us to be faithful to His Word, His church, His people, and to His mission in the world. Do not separate God's truth from His written Word and do not separate God's love from His Law for if you do, you will consider the truth to be hate and you will end up hating the truth. That is what is happening in many churches today. May God continue to grant us faithful pastors and laymen who will proclaim and confess the truth before men in love and without fear; Amen!