

DATE: April 5, 2009 Palm Sunday

TEXT: John 11:45-57

TITLE: "Lies"



Today is Palm Sunday. This morning we celebrate the Triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. The crowd rushes to the street, they wave their palm branches, they cry "Hosanna". They welcome Jesus as their king. But then, 5 days later the crowd yell again... this time they are yelling "crucify Him". What happened? How could the crowd one day welcome Him as King and a few days later demand His death? That is the question I want to answer this morning. I believe the answer is found in the Gospel of John in a text that immediately precedes the story of Christ's Triumphal entrance. This bible text is sandwiched between the account of palm Sunday and the raising of Lazarus. This text tells of the reaction of the Jews to the raising of Lazarus.

It tells of a conspiracy of lies. Let me begin with this illustration about telling lies. We have all heard of the little boy who cried wolf. Let me retell this story as I remember it.

There once was a little boy who was hired by a village to tend their flock of sheep. He was told, "if you see a wolf you are to cry 'wolf, wolf, wolf' at the top of your lung and we will

come out and save you and the sheep.” So the boy goes out to watch the sheep. He soon discovered that the job was very, very boring. Day after day he watched the sheep and was lonely for other humans. One day, out of boredom and loneliness he decided to test the village. So he stood up and at the top of his lungs he yelled “wolf, wolf, wolf.” Sure enough the townspeople came rushing out to defend the sheep. When they arrived they discovered no wolf but only a laughing boy. They warned the boy to never do that again and returned to the village. The next week once again the boy was bored so once again he yelled “wolf, wolf, wolf” and once again the townspeople ran out to the flock and found only a laughing boy. A third time he did the same thing. But then the next week as he was tending the flock, he did indeed see a wolf... it was coming closer and closer. He stood up and yelled “wolf, wolf, wolf”. But this time the townspeople decided they were not going to believe the lying boy and refused to come to the flock. And the story ends..... the wolf eats the little boy because he lied and cried wolf one to many times. The danger to lying.

But I want to change this story. One day the village wanted someone to go out and tend

the sheep. No one wanted the job. Finally they asked this little boy. But the boy is afraid that a wolf will come. The village says “If a wolf appears you will cry ‘wolf’ and we will come to help you.” But the boy is still afraid and says “ I don’t believe you will get there in time so I will not take the job.” The town is desperate to have the boy tend the flock so the town officials tell him “you don’t have to worry, there are no wolves around here.” The little boy went to the market place and asked “If I tend the sheep won’t a wolf come and eat me?” The towns people all told him “you don’t have to worry, there are no wolves around here.” So the boy goes and tends the sheep. Day after day, month after month he tends the sheep and sees no wolf and the villagers keep telling him “there are no wolves”. One day he looks up and sees an animal approaching. He says to himself “That looks like a wolf... but I know there are no wolves around here.” So he closes his eyes and relaxes. And the story ends... the wolf eats the little boy because he believed the lie and did not cry wolf. The moral of the story is this... don’t believe a lie do matter how many people tell you it is true.

The pharisees were spreading lies about Jesus. They were threatened by Jesus and wanted

the people to believe the lie so they told it again and again. These lies are still believed today.

Let me share the 4 lies that were begun by the Pharisees.

Lie # 1 Experts are needed to discover the truth. From our text verses 45-47

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

Remember, these people had just seen the raising of Lazarus. They had seen a man who had been dead of 4 days come alive. What did they do? They went to the pharisees... the “experts” to get their opinion.

A great problem had arisen in the Middle ages. Priests were given exclusive power to teach the truth. The Bible was available only in Latin... and only the Priests knew Latin. It was illegal... blasphemous to translate the bible into any other language. For example, there was a desire to build St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Money was needed... therefore a doctrine of indulgences was found in the Bible. The people were told...”if you desire forgiveness of sins an monetary offering was needed.”

But then came the Reformation. One of the primary lesson martin Luther taught was this...

all Christians have access to the truth. He taught the “priesthood of all believers. In 1522, one year after the Diet of Worms, Luther was hiding from the Catholic leaders who desired to put him to death. He was in a castle in Wartburg. In 11 weeks Luther translated the Greek new Testament into German. By 1534 Luther had translated the Old Testament into German. In 1524, another man met with Luther in Wittenburg, Germany. His name was William Tyndale who in 1526 translated the New Testament into English for the first time. In 1536 he was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English.

The principal is the... truth is given to all. I stand here this morning to teach the Word of God. It is the truth. You too are called to study the Word of God. In my studies I have blind spots. I am certainly not infallible. You are called to be a person of God’s word and discover His truth.

Lie # 2 The majority sets the truth. Our text teaches us this...

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs..... So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

The Sanhedrin met to vote on Jesus’ fate. The vote was to arrest and put him to death.

The truth is this... the majority is often wrong. This is especially true in a country like America.

We are a Democracy. That means we elect our leaders. We must be careful... just because a majority elects our leaders that does not mean that a majority decides what is right and wrong.

When a majority decides what is right and wrong you end up with a Nazi Germany. The majority of people thought the Jews were a threat.

There is a debate in our land about abortion. Again and again I hear statistics about what percentage of people are pro life versus those who are pro abortion. Let me say... it doesn't matter. Our source of truth is the bible not an opinion poll... not even a judicial decision. Scripture is clear... from the time of conception every person is a person, valuable in the eyes of God. To kill an innocent person is murder.

I believe today if Jesus was running for political office he would not get many votes. He was uncompromising and firm in truth. This does not change the fact that Jesus is Lord. Heaven is a monarchy not a democracy. God is truth. God rules. We worship.

Pilate put the decision to the crowd... they yelled "crucify Him" I believe today the crowd

would yell the same thing. Jesus understood this fact. He taught this lesson...

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Majority usually chose the wide gate... the gate of hell.

Lie # 3 The ends justify the means. This is taught in verse 48 **"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."** They were saying "We must nip is problem in the bud... we must kill him now." In the year 70 A.D. the Romans came and totally destroyed Jerusalem.

The principal is this our choices and our actions must not primarily be determined by the final result. Our actions and choices must primarily be determined by what is right and wrong based on the Word of God.

In God's eyes, the process is more important than the end result. REPEAT God does not care if we have a lot of money... God cares if we make righteous decisions with the money that we do have. In parenting we know process is more important than anything else. We may tell

our children to put God first.... but they will watch our lives and they will see what is first in our lives. Have you ever been caught in a hypocrisy by your children. I have. I remember when Erin was 4 or 5 years old I was talking about someone and she asked "Isn't that gossip?" It was. God does not keep track of how many times you and I go to church... He see our hearts and knows if we truly are worshiping him when we do come together in this place. As the men and women who were waving branches and crying "hosanna" God saw their hearts. The majority were lying. The majority wanted a savior on their terms. A general who would lead a revolt. When the truth was revealed they revealed their true natures. "Crucify him" they yelled.

In God's eyes the means are far more important than the ends.

Finally lie # 4 It is possible to remain neutral about Jesus Christ. Verse 56 of our text says this..

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?"

They were just standing around waiting for something to happen. Later they were part of

the crowd yelling “crucify Him.” There is no neutrality when it comes to Jesus Christ. You can not just watch the Easter events and say “Isn’t that a nice story.” Each and every person is in one of two crowds... We are either yelling “Hosanna you are Lord of My life.” And truly meaning it. Or we are yelling “crucify Him.” To ignore Christ is to be in the crowd condemning Him.

This is this day Christ is declared king. He truly is King... but he has a unique kingdom. It is a kingdom of choice. It is a kingdom for his followers. Are we part of His kingdom or not.

There is no neutrality.

These are the lies that swayed the crowd 2000 years ago. They are the same lies today.

Reject the lies... Jesus Christ is Lord and King

AMEN