

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, June 16th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Devil's Deceit
Proper 6
2 Corinthians 5: 6-10

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Let us worship God, our light and our salvation.

The Lord is the stronghold of our lives.

We desire to live in God's house
and to seek God in his holy temple.

**We have come with shouts of joy,
to sing and to make music to the Lord.**

Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.

**Teach us your ways and make straight our paths
in this hour of worship and always.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Ever present God,
we thank you for calling us to meet with you today.
We praise you for coming to us long before we first came to you,
for knowing who would be here today,
and for knowing even our motives for coming.
By your Spirit lead and guide us during this service,
to help us hear you when you speak
and to guide our responses with hearts and voices
that rejoice in your presence. **Amen.**

Opening Hymns (2)

Reckless Love of God – Cory Asbury

Before I spoke a word, You were singing over me
You have been so, so good to me
Before I took a breath, You breathed Your life in me
You have been so so kind to me

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
 Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the 99
 And I couldn't earn it
 I don't deserve it, still You give yourself away
 Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God

When I was Your foe, still Your love fought for me
 You have been so, so good to me
 When I felt no worth, You paid it all for me
 You have been so, so kind to me

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God
 Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the 99
 And I couldn't earn it
 I don't deserve it, still You give yourself away
 Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God

There's no shadow You won't light up
 Mountain You won't climb up
 Coming after me
 There's no wall You won't kick down
 Lie You won't tear down
 Coming after me

There's no shadow You won't light up
 Mountain You won't climb up
 Coming after me
 There's no wall You won't kick down
 Lie You won't tear down
 Coming after me

There's no shadow You won't light up
 Mountain You won't climb up
 Coming after me
 There's no wall You won't kick down
 Lie You won't tear down
 Coming after me

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God
 Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the 99
 I couldn't earn it, I don't deserve it, still You give yourself away
 Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending reckless love of God

Good Good Father – Chris Tomlin

Oh, I've heard a thousand stories of what they think You're like
 But I've heard the tender whisper of love in the dead of night
 And You tell me that You're pleased and that I'm never alone

You're a good, good Father
 It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are
 And I'm loved by You
 It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

Oh, and I've seen many searching for answers far and wide
 But I know we're all searching for answers only You provide
 'Cause You know just what we need before we say a word

You're a good, good Father
 It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are
 And I'm loved by You
 It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

Because You are perfect in all of Your ways
 You are perfect in all of Your ways
 You are perfect in all of Your ways to us
 You are perfect in all of Your ways
 Oh, You're perfect in all of Your ways
 You are perfect in all of Your ways to us

Oh, it's love so undeniable
 I, I can hardly speak
 Peace so unexplainable
 I, I can hardly think
 As You call me deeper still
 As You call me deeper still
 As You call me deeper still into love, love, love

You're a good, good Father
 It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are
 And I'm loved by You
 It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

And You're a good, good Father
 It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are
 And I'm loved by You
 It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

You're a good, good Father
 It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are
 And I'm loved by You
 It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am
 (You're a good, good Father)

You are perfect in all of Your ways (it's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are)
 (And I'm loved by You)
 You are perfect in all of Your ways (it's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Responsive ReadingPsalm 1

1 Blessed is the man
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

**2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.**

3 He is like a tree
 planted by streams of water
 that yields its fruit in its season,
 and its leaf does not wither.
 In all that he does, he prospers.

**4 The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

**6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.**

Prayer for illumination(Congregant Prepared)Scripture2 Corinthians 5:6-10

⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Sermon

Genesis 1:1-2

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

This is where we need to start if we want to understand the spiritual battle that is going on in this world daily.

The first few verses of Genesis tell us that in the beginning there was only a formless space, empty and dark. Then God began his work and through his word he created shapes, he created light, he filled the emptiness with life. God took what was chaos and filled it with order. And the Bible tells us that each day after seeing what he had created 'it was good'.

However, not everyone agreed with what God was doing. The Bible also teaches us of the one who rebelled against God, the accuser, Satan. Satan wants to put himself in God's place, and knowing that he cannot defeat God, he goes after God's creation, mankind, the ones to whom God had given authority over the earth and all of its creatures.

Satan's goal is to disrupt the good order that God had created, to put chaos back into the world. And you do not have to be a very astute observer to see just how successful Satan has been in recent years, our society is becoming more and more confused by the minute.

Just look at how gender roles have been mixed up and confused, husband and wife, mother and father these terms have little meaning anymore to the majority of society, we no longer seem to be aware of what these roles are or even if they should exist.

The youth are confused about their place in the family, many are living in an open rebellion against their parents, teachers and any other authority that tries to be over them.

We are even confused about the value of human life. We have a large abortion movement that teaches people it is ok to have an abortion because in the early stages they are not really life yet and have no value. And now, we have the same thing happening with MAID and people being told that their life has no value while they are ill or elderly. These things exist because we no longer understand the value of the life God has given us.

Satan has indeed done a good job of weaving his chaos into our world.

And it all began with just a few bites from a piece of fruit in the Garden of Eden. Isn't it absurd that all it took was a few bites from a piece of fruit to give Satan so much power in this world,

and how after the flavour of that fruit is long forgotten, Adam and Eve were still paying the price for the decision that they had made.

This is what the deceiver does, he depends on us making unwise decisions. He depends on us having a confused understanding of God's Word and the values we are supposed to live by so that he can offer us a few bites of fruit, and long after that flavor is gone, we realize that he has taken much more from us.

This is shown over and over in the Scriptures. Achan traded his life for a wedge of Gold and a Babylonian garment. Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. David chased Bathsheba, Samson fell for Delilah. God warns us of the deceit of the devil and how he uses our flesh against us over and over in the Scriptures. This is how Satan works!

And when it happens, mankind always tries to find someone else to blame.

Even in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:1-13

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Satan deceived Eve by simply asking her 'Did God really say that you should not eat of any tree? Don't worry you will not die if you eat the fruit of the tree that God told you not too.'

Then after they eat of the fruit they hide from God, knowing they have done wrong.

And when God confronts Adam he says, 'Don't blame me, it was that woman you gave me! She enticed me to eat the forbidden fruit!'

And when God confronts Eve she says, 'Don't blame me. It was the serpent who deceived me before I ate.'

We are no different in the world today, when our sins come to the surface in our life, we are quick to look for a scapegoat. 'Don't blame me. It was someone or something else that caused me to become involved in this sin'

So, let's take a look at how the great deceiver does this in our lives.

Perhaps the most common justification for sin is 'Well, that's just the way I am!'

People will use this justification all of the time. That's just the way I am, I have anger issues, or I have an addictive personality, it's just the way I am.

The Scripture constantly reminds us that we are accountable for our words and our actions. We cannot simply excuse them by saying that it's just the way I am. The Scripture tells us to be born anew in the Holy Spirit, to shed the old self and become the new self, setting aside the ways that we had and taking on the ways of Christ in our lives.

So even if it is just the way we are, we know it is not the way we are meant to be, so we should be confessing our sin, and seeking the help of the Holy Spirit to change. We cannot justify our sin by putting the blame on the personality traits that we have in this world.

The next most common justification is to blame it on somebody else.

We often see people blame their behavior on their family background, their relationship with their parents, or someone else in their lives. 'If you only understood what happened to me, you would understand why I do this, it's their fault'

This is one of the biggest dangers of secular counselling in the world today, when people turn to counselling or therapy for help, it often becomes something that is blamed on someone else, so that they feel justified in their behavior, even when that something is untrue.

Yes, it is true that our relationships in this world do have an impact on our lives, however, too often they become an excuse for us to make bad decisions and not take accountability for our own lives.

The Bible does not allow this as a justification either, it always reminds us that we are accountable and responsible for our own lives.

We cannot justify the sin in our lives by blaming the people around us. We cannot blame our friend's alcohol abuse for our own drinking problems, we cannot blame our own inability to quit an addiction on anyone but ourselves. We know that just because the world says it is ok, or the people around us say that it is ok, does not make it ok in the eyes of God and the Scripture tells us over and over that we are to be more concerned with God than with the world.

So, if we cannot blame God for the way he made us, or the people around us, we surely must be able to say, 'The devil made me do it'

This is quickly becoming one of the most prevalent excuses for sin in the world today. When people blatantly do wrong in the world the wrongs that they have committed are quickly justified by the socio-economic background that they come from, or the institutionalized biases against them, or the callous society around them. It is always some outside force that acted upon them, or us, and we use that outside force as an excuse to justify our sin.

'It was not me, the serpent made me do it!'

Yet once again the Scripture reminds us that the devil cannot force us to sin. He is the great deceiver, the father of lies, so that is what he does. He deceives, he lies, and he tempts us into sin.

He does this because he cannot force us to sin. If the devil could make us sin, there would be no need for his deceit, lies and temptation. He would just force us to sin and remove us from God forever.

If we are standing upon the edge of sin, the devil has to deceive us, lie to us and tempt us to take part in that sin. He has to make us take that step that leads us into sin. He has to trick us into justifying the sin in our own hearts and minds before we are willing to decide to sin. He does not force us to do it, he does not just stand behind us and give us a push over the edge.

Eve made a choice in the Garden of Eden to question what God had said, all the serpent did was pose the question to her and walk her to the edge. The same is true for all of us and whatever sin we have in our lives. We are not just that way, our relationships did not make us that way and Satan did not force us to sin, we were on the edge, and we stepped over it into sin at some point after we justified it in our own hearts and minds. Nobody forced us into immorality, we made a choice, and we are accountable for that choice. We chose that first drink, we chose to lie, we chose to covet, we chose to idolize, we choose.

Often, when we come to the realization that we choose to sin, we still try to blame. Only this time we blame God. Afterall, God is responsible for everything, isn't he? He is the one who

made me this way, gave me this family, introduced me to these friends who led me astray. God is the one who did not give me the willpower to say 'no' or to do the right thing.

However, the Scripture once again disagrees! The book of James tells us that God will never tempt us. So, the choices we make in this world are entirely our choices.

Which is why Corinthians tells us:

2 Corinthians 5:9-10

⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Simply put, God holds every human being accountable for their own lives. We cannot blame others, or Satan or God for the choices we make in this life. We are all accountable to God on the day of judgement.

That is bad news for many people in this world. However, there is good news too. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ loved us and died for our sins and that sacrifice of his blood more than covers the debt we owe to God for our sin.

The first step to having the blood of Christ cover the debt of your sin is to accept accountability for your own actions, to admit your sin to yourself and to God. As long as you are trying to find someone or something else to blame your sin on, you will never come to grips with the fact that you are indeed a sinner in need of salvation.

You have to come to a place where you will stand before God and pray, 'Father be merciful to me, a sinner' When we do that our loving father embraces us into his arms and covers us with his blood saving us from our sinful nature.

Donald Barnhouse, an American preacher, once told a story about the time a prairie fire swept across his childhood farm. It had flashed across the land and burned everything; house, buildings, crops, everything.

After the fire when his father was walking across the burned farmyard, he was kicking away debris. When he kicked what he thought was a burned-out stump, it set off little baby chickens running in all directions.

When he took a closer look, he realized that the stump he had kicked was not a log but the old momma hen, who had placed her body over her chicks to protect them from the fire. So, the chicks were alive, because she had given her life up for them. That is what mother chickens do.

And that is what Jesus will do for us.

Matthew 23:37 says

Matthew 23:37

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

Jesus is right there, willing to take us under his wing, to protect us from the sin in our lives. We just need to come to him and admit our sin. We need to trust and obey in the Lord and begin a new life of walking as the Salt and Light of God’s Word in this broken world so that others can discover the truth of who Jesus is and find Salvation under his wings.

Let us Pray,

Hold on to this Comfort in All Trials and Temptations

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 through your Son
 you promised us your Holy Spirit,
 that he will convict the world of sin,
 of righteousness and of judgment.
 Enlighten our hearts,
 that we may confess our sins,
 obtain eternal righteousness through faith in Christ,
 and hold on to this comfort
 in all our trials and temptations,
 that Christ is Lord over the devil and death and all things
 and that he will graciously deliver us
 out of all our afflictions
 and make us partakers of eternal salvation;
 through your Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Easter 4, Cantate

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn

Revelation Song – Phil Wickham

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
 Holy, holy is He
 Sing a new song to Him who sits on
 Heaven's mercy seat

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
 Holy, holy is He
 Sing a new song to Him who sits on
 Heaven's mercy seat

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty
 Who was and is and is to come

With all creation I sing praise to the King of kings
 You are my everything and I will adore You

Clothed in rainbows of living color
 Flashes of lighting rolls of thunder
 Blessing and honor strength and glory and power be
 To You the only wise King

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty
 Who was and is and is to come
 With all creation I sing praise to the King of kings
 You are my everything and I will adore You

Filled with wonder awestruck wonder
 At the mention of Your name
 Jesus Your name is power, breath and living water
 Such a marvelous mystery

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty
 Who was and is and is to come
 With all creation I sing praise to the King of kings
 You are my everything and I will adore You, I will adore You

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, gracious Father,
 in the presence of your bounty keep us humble,
 in the presence of all people's needs make us compassionate and caring.

Give us faith in our praying and love in our serving,
 knowing that by your power

all may find a new balance in living and a new victory in adversity.

We pray for all unhappy lives,
those who are bitter and resentful, feeling life has given them a raw deal,
those who are sensitive to criticism and quick to take offense,
those who desire their own way, whatever the inconvenience
or cost to others.
May your judgment and mercy be for their healing.

We pray for those who are lonely,
who are shy and self-conscious,
who find it hard to make friends;
those who are nervous and timid,
who ever feel themselves strangers in a world they can scarcely understand.
May your presence inspire confidence and ensure companionship.
We pray for those who live with bitter regrets,
for loving relationships brought to ruin,
for opportunities freely given and woefully abused,
for the bitterness of defeat or betrayal at another's hand,
or for failure in personal integrity.
May your grace give new hope to find victory in the very scene of failure.

We pray for all in illness and pain,
weary of the day and fearful of the night.
Grant healing, if it be your will,
and at all times through faith the gift of your indwelling peace.

Bless the company of Christ's folk, the church in every land.
Make her eager in worship,
fearless in proclamation of the gospel, and passionate for caring.

Bless our country. Bless our leaders.
Bless our children and grant us peace within our borders.
Grant us as a nation to be found effective in establishing peace
throughout the world.

Bless us, each one, in the communion of the saints,
and keep us ever mindful of the great cloud of witnesses that,
following in their steps, as they did in the steps of the Master,
we may with them at the last receive the fulfillment
promised to your people.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
now and forevermore. **Amen.**

Benediction

The love of God the Father, the faithful creator,
the peace of Christ, the wounded healer,
the joy of the challenging Spirit,
the hope of the Three in One
surround and encourage you
today, tonight, and forever.