

"Sit Back and Wait"

Matthew 26:57-58

March 23, 2011

Lent 3

One day, Satan had a meeting in hell and called together all his assistant evil spirits. Satan asked them, "How can we deceive people and cause them to go to hell? What's the best plan?" One evil spirit said, "Let me go to earth and tell them that there is no God. People will know nothing about God and will come to hell." Satan said, "That won't work. People can look around and see that God created the world. Their consciences also tell them that there is a God. We can't make them believe that lie." One evil spirit said, "Let me go to earth and tell people that the Bible is all a lie and not from God. People won't believe in Jesus, heaven, and hell. Then they will come to hell with us." Satan said, "No, that won't work. Only the "smart" people will believe that." Many people will still believe in the Bible. The meeting continued with brainstorming. Finally, one evil spirit said, "Let me go to earth and tell people there is a God, there is a Savior Jesus, there is a heaven and a hell. But I will tell them DON'T HURRY to believe. DON'T hurry to change your lives and actions. You can repent tomorrow. You can believe in Jesus tomorrow. You can do God's will tomorrow. Postpone it." Satan accepted that idea and it has been very successful.

This is not a true story but it teaches us a lesson. God calls people to confess their sins, repent, and trust in Jesus for forgiveness. God calls people to serve Him and serve each other. That's what God wants us to do. However, Satan wants what? He wants us to do nothing -- sit back and wait.

Peter did that. When the soldiers arrested Jesus and led Him to the High Priest's home, Peter and another disciple followed -- at a distance. Remember that Peter promised to stay with Jesus, fight for Jesus, and die in the company of Jesus. But when they arrived, what did Peter do? He sat down and waited to see what would happen.

Not doing God's will, but sitting back, waiting to see what happens. We do the same thing all the time. Maybe some of you here tonight do not yet truly trust in Jesus as your Savior. Maybe you are here because someone forced you. Maybe you have come here because it is a habit. You know that God wants you to repent and believe. But you are sitting back and waiting. Later, you will believe. Later, you will trust in Jesus. Young adults have told me this often. They say, "Now, I want to have fun and enjoy my life. Later, I will come back to church and believe in Jesus."

Maybe you already believe in Jesus and you know God wants you to live according to His will and commands. He wants you to come to worship and read His Word regularly. He wants you to use your time, money, and skills to serve Him. He wants you to love and serve each other: children, honoring your parents; parents, loving your children; church members, serving and helping with the Lord's work here at church. Yet how often we do not do those things. We sit back and wait to see what happens. Maybe we really don't want to obey God. Maybe we prefer to do something else. Maybe we want to see if someone else will do the job. Maybe we are afraid or nervous to obey God because it will change our lives, lose our friends, or give us suffering.

But sitting back, waiting to see, and doing nothing means we are not doing God's will. Refusing to do God's will is the same as breaking God's command. It is sin. Our sinning causes God and us to become separated and we earn that trip to hell with Satan forever. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, deaf or hearing, male or female -- the Bible says that all of us have done that. And all of us have earned God's anger and punishment for not doing His will.

But God did not sit back, wait, see what would happen, and do nothing. God continued to love us despite our refusal to obey Him and do His will. God established a plan to forgive our sin and rescue us from hell. And God acted to carry out that plan. We gather here on these evenings during Lent to remember and thank God for His activity on our part. He sent His Son, Jesus, to do His will on our behalf.

When Jesus was here on this earth, He didn't sit back, wait, see what would happen and do nothing. Jesus knew His job - obeying God's Law perfectly in the place of sinners and dying on the cross in place of sinners - and He did it. Neither of these was not easy. It was not easy to live perfectly and obey the Law perfectly. Satan was constantly tempting Jesus to avoid God's Law and do things for Himself. It was not easy to ignore. But Jesus never listened to Satan, never obeyed Satan. He willingly lived perfectly and obeyed God's Law perfectly and He did that for you.

It was not easy to go to the cross. Jesus knew everything because He was the Son of God. He knew the future before He went to the cross. Jesus knew the cross meant extreme suffering and a painful death. Jesus knew that, while on the cross, Jesus and His Father would become separated and that He would suffer the punishment. Yet Jesus willingly went to the cross, willingly suffered pain, willingly suffered hell, and willingly died - all in our place.

If Peter had not sat back and did nothing, but had gone forward and tried to help Jesus, probably nothing would have happened. Peter couldn't really help Jesus. However, Jesus' perfect obedience and holy living and His suffering and death helps us a lot. It is like having a BANK ACCOUNT. If someone else puts money in it, that money becomes yours. In the same way, Jesus obedience becomes your obedience. His holiness becomes your holiness. His suffering becomes your suffering. His death becomes your death. So, even though you have sat back, waited to see what would happen instead of doing God's will, God sees that you have done it all and obeyed all because Jesus did that for you. And all the times you have done wrong and failed to do His will which you owe to Him - God has already canceled that because Jesus paid for it on the cross.

So, when Satan tells you to sit back, wait, and do nothing, don't believe that lie. Tell him that Jesus has already done everything for you. Jesus has obeyed all of God's Laws for you. Jesus has died and paid for all your mistakes. Then, if Satan tells you, "Well, if Jesus has already done everything, then sit back and do nothing. Be a lazy Christian." Don't believe that lie either. When you have faith in Jesus Christ, having received His forgiveness and His holy obedience, that changes

your attitude. You don't want to sit back and do nothing and wait and see. His great love inspires you to lovingly obey Him and serve each other. And His Spirit lives within you, empowering you to obey and helping you to serve.

Attending worship regularly -- you can do it. Giving a generous proportion of your money to the Lord -- you can do it. Serving the Lord here at church -- you can do it. Telling people the news about Jesus and the way to heaven and inviting them to church -- you can do it. Comforting the sad, visiting the lonely, feeding the hungry, and so on -- you can do it. Why? Not because you have to be sure and obey every one of God's Laws. Jesus has already done that for you. Not because you have to pay for your mistakes. Jesus has already done that for you. You are free to go ahead and do because Jesus has already done. You are free to do that and you have the power -- His power -- to do these things out of love and gratitude to Him.

In our story tonight, Peter sat back and waited to see what would happen. Later, Satan got ahold of Peter. He denied knowing Jesus and left Jesus. Don't let that happen to you. Don't sit back and wait to see what's going to happen in your life and what God wants you to do. But go forward. Go forward with His forgiveness. Go forward with His holiness within you. Go forward with His power guiding you and helping you. Go forward with Jesus living in you and through you to accomplish all that God wants. Amen.