



by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.” They turn what is good into something evil. Rather than glorifying God for the good that Jesus did, they accuse Him of evil!

Is that not what happens all around us today? One person says, “Life is a precious gift. We should protect it from conception.” They are called a misogynist. Another says, “Marriage between one man and woman is a wonderful blessing and gift instituted by God in the beginning of time.” They are considered hateful and close-minded. Someone else says, “The Law of the land is good and noble, and we would do well to abide by it.” They are charged with racism and bigotry. Meanwhile, the rest of us are left to try and discern, “What is the truth here?” And then we are told, “There is no absolute truth! Truth is just a fabric of one’s environment based on social status, race, gender, and culture.”

Remember the General Rule. Don’t be overcome with the over-complicated nature of everything in this world today. God revealed His eternal truth in ways that even a child can understand. Romans 1:19-20, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” Again, Psalm 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”

Remember, too, that the world is part of the Unholy Trinity. The world is just as fallen and corrupt as Satan himself and our sinful nature. Don’t think for a second that Miss America’s dream of world peace will ever be achieved. Peace on this side of glory is always a façade. In the Large Catechism under the 6<sup>th</sup> petition of the Lord’s Prayer, Luther timelessly writes and the Church confesses, “The world... offends us in word and deed. It drives us to anger and impatience.” Honestly, is there any Christian here that turns on the News and isn’t at least slightly perturbed at what they usually see? This is the result of the Fall into sin – not because of whoever or whatever we want to point a finger to blame! The simple definition of the 6<sup>th</sup> petition, “Lead us not into temptation” is, “God tempts no one. But we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.”

The unholy Trinity seeks to corrupt, ruin, and destroy faith in us with a triad of temptation. For where there is false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice, there is an unrepentant sinner, void of the gift of forgiveness Christ freely offers. The world deceives us into thinking It can protect us; that we are safe under its authority. This, by the way, is the false comfort of the strong man in our Gospel reading. Jesus said, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards His own palace, his goods are safe” (v. 21). While we live in this world apart from repentance and faith, we are the strong man’s goods, as it were.

But alas, there is One stronger than the devil. He who is stronger is Christ. It is Christ who takes away the strong man’s armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. In other words, by His grace God reclaims what was lost in the Fall into sin and adopts His creatures back into His family. Apart from repentance and faith, the Devil guards his spoils. In repentance and faith, God by His grace and power guards his formerly lost and condemned creatures and makes us His own. Living in the freedom of the Gospel, now we can hear and guard God’s Word as Jesus concludes the reading today. “Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!” That word “keep” describes exactly what a prison guard does. Just as a prison guard keeps watch over the prisoners with careful earnestness knowing the cost of letting but one prisoner escape, so also blessed are those who not only hear the Word of God but guard it with the same earnest zeal, not allowing one iota or dot of God’s Word to pass away (Mt 5:18) from their hearts, lips, and actions.

Don’t let the world despair you, lead you into false belief, or other great shame and vice. That’s what you’re praying against every time you pray the Lord’s Prayer. When we fail to “hear and keep” God’s Word, in repentance we trust God nevertheless guards and keeps us, strengthening us with His gifts to endure every cross and trial; keeping us steadfast in the one true faith. James 1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” The world constantly changes and evolves; the love of God remains constant and certain. Blessed are you when you hear the Word of God and keep it, guard it, and hold onto it! For it is those who believe this simple truth that Jesus died for the sins that will inherit eternal life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.