

Lent 2018 – The Battles of Lent

"The Battle of the High Priest's Palace"

Text: Mark 14:53-64

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in Jesus Christ, whose suffering and death we once again join to commemorate, as we also mourn the sin that caused it. *Our* sin. Amen.

Dishonesty is not just another sin. It was the gateway through which all other sins entered our world. It was through dishonesty that Satan successfully tempted Adam and Eve – a subtle mixture of truth and lie that he used to create an illusion. With the creation of that illusion (that men could be as God) sinful desire was born. And mankind believed The Lie, and died.

The devil thus created one of the greatest evils that has continued to plague mankind since the Fall. This too Jesus had to defeat. This evening, as we continue to examine the Battles of Lent, we examine in particular the Battle of the High Priest's Palace, where our Lord met and defeated the evil that is The Lie. The text that will guide us in that pursuit this evening is found recorded in the Gospel of Mark, the 14th Chapter, beginning with the 53rd verse:

^{ESV} **Mark 14:53-64** *And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. ⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" ⁵⁹ Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶¹ But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" ⁶² And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." ⁶³ And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? ⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death.*

This is God's Word – the verbally inspired words by which we will seek to be filled, educated, and strengthened this evening. That all of the benefits of these holy words might be ours, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

The theme for our Lenten meditations this year (*The Battles of Lent*) is our attempt to better understand and appreciate what exactly our Savior was accomplishing for us during those last tortured days of his walk to the cross. It is our prayer that in seeing these familiar places as battle sites we will once again be reminded not only of what our Lord has done for us, but just how unworthy we truly are of his love and mercy. This evening we examine the Battle of the High Priest's Palace, recognizing it as an epic struggle against all that is false.

Picture in your mind the most hideous creature you there can conjure – a foul, oozing, horrific thing of nightmares. Now add to that most repulsive image the added dimension that whatever that hideous creature touches, dies a slow, agonizing, irreversible death.

What interaction would you wish to have with something like that? Would you invite it to your house? Would you borrow something – *anything* - from it, even if it had what you needed? Would you try to keep it as a pet, or allow the thing to play with your children? Would you teach your children how to interact it, but to "just be careful"? Or would you teach them to run at the first sight of something so terrible?

Our answers to all of these questions would, of course, be obvious. No one would want anything to do with something like that. No matter what it had, we wouldn't want it. No matter what it offered, or what benefit we could possibly identify, no sane person would willingly have anything to do with it.

It's too bad then that we can see no visual representation of the enemy that Jesus battled there in the High Priest's palace in the early morning hours of Good Friday. Maybe then we could see The Lie as the true evil that it is, for that was the face, the nature, of Jesus' opponent in the High Priest's palace.

But we see no such physical representation or manifestation of lies, and therefore we treat this malevolent miscreant as something very different than what it truly is. We invite it into our homes. We teach our children how to play with it, how to keep it as a pet. We interact and do business with it. If, for example, we identify something that we can get from The Lie, we often have no trouble utilizing its services. It can be almost

anything – money, reputation, possessions, power – the list is endless. A police officer pulls you over, and suddenly you are very interested in what The Lie might be able to provide for you – like a way out of the fine or the punishment that you deserve. You are talking with friends or co-workers and The Lie offers you the means to gain their envy, admiration or respect. You are filling out your tax returns and begin to negotiate with The Lie in an effort to render to Caesar less than what Caesar is owed.

All of this is made so much easier by the fact that we just don't see dishonesty (The Lie) as the monster that it is. Yet this was the enemy that tried to destroy Jesus in the High Priest's palace. The battle there was between Jesus and all that is untrue.

As true God, Jesus has always hated the lie. Satan used the lie to destroy Adam and Eve, along with God's perfect creation, and to thereby plunge all mankind into the darkness of sin and death. It was the lie with which Jesus' enemies contracted to put him to death. It is with the lie that the devil destroys infinitely precious human souls still today. It is only The Lie that can destroy *you*.

We too should therefore hate The Lie. We should loathe anything and everything that it touches. But we don't. We keep it on retainer, with its number in our speed dial. We find it just so easy to push send and to use its services whenever we can identify a benefit.

In fact the depth or severity of the problem becomes obvious whenever a Christian discussion about lying turns – as it invariably does – to the question of whether or not it is ever acceptable, or even *good*, to lie. "*What about Rahab, who lied to protect the Jewish spies?*" "*What about David, who was apparently not condemned by God for lying to the Philistines?*" Could these be exceptions to the rule? Could some lies actually be good in God's eyes?

Here's the problem with those sorts of questions. The moment we come to imagine that there are exceptions to the rule that all lies are sinful, then suddenly every situation becomes a potential exception. Before you know it, there are no rules, only exceptions. We are appallingly skilled at rationalizing how or why every situation is somehow an exception. We're told that Stalin actually rationalized that he needed to murder all those millions of his fellow citizens *for their own good*. Once he came to the conclusion that his remaining in power was the best thing possible for his people, then nothing at all could be considered wrong if it served to solidify his power. Such is the power of rationalizations.

While you and I haven't ordered the execution of millions, we've done the same sort of business with The Lie countless times. The Lie, as you know, doesn't offer just one product – the bald-faced untruth. He's got quite a catalogue. It's really all the same product, it just has different labeling – like "half-truth," "little white lie," "deception," "obfuscation," "fib," "story," "invention," and "tall tail." It's all the same hideous beast.

And that's the beast that Jesus fought against in the High Priest's palace.

Obviously that's not the only time he fought against the lie. He did so his entire life. Yet in the High Priest's palace the battle reached its fevered pitch. Here the monster at the same time both attacked and sought to entice our Savior.

Everything about Jesus' "trial" in the palace of the High Priest was false. It was fake – a lie. The meeting itself was illegal, for it was convened prior to sunrise, which was a violation of Jewish law. The Jewish leaders were clearly not seeking justice, for they knowingly hired liars to give false testimony. For three years they had been trying to gather evidence they could use to condemn him, and all they had at the end of those three years was the lies they had to buy. The fact that the Jewish leaders were perfectly willing to lie to condemn Jesus, all the while still confident that they were somehow "doing God's will," is undoubtedly one of the best measures of the appeal and power of The Lie.

His enemies attacked Jesus with both lies and half-truths. The accusation listed in our text was a half-truth, which is just another lie. The testimony was false because it twisted half of what Jesus actually said. He did not say, "***! will destroy this temple...***" He said, "***If you destroy this temple...***" He then *did* conclude by promising to "***rebuild it in three days.***" The "temple" he referred to was his body, which, if destroyed (killed) would be raised on the third day. The false witnesses tried to make him out to be an insurrectionist with their "***! will destroy this temple...***"

Yet, again, the battle was not just against The Lie as an accusing enemy but against The Lie as a potential ally. Jesus knew that he was about to suffer for the sins of the world. The crushing weight of that realization was terrible beyond our comprehension. Don't imagine for an instant that the lie wasn't right there, generously offering its services. His sales pitch: "*A lie here, a half-truth there, and the whole problem will just go away.*" The Lie undoubtedly included the well-worn "*everyone's doing it!*" The very souls that Jesus came to save were lying about him.

If they didn't care, why should he? How appealing, how seductive, to reason that a few simple lies would prevent a great injustice.

Jesus knew that the promise of The Lie is itself a lie. Lies don't solve problems; they create them. In Jesus' case, lying would have destroyed him – and *us*. Dishonesty in any form would have been a sin, and the sacrifice that Jesus brought to the cross had to be a perfect, sinless life.

The High Priest must have recognized that he had no grounds to condemn Jesus, so in desperation he put the question to Jesus himself: ***"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"*** The parallel account in Matthew 26 tells us that the High Priest actually put Jesus under oath: ***"I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."***

And there it was, sitting right in front of him – the way out, The Lie. One little lie and Jesus could make it all go away. Knowing what he did about The Lie, Jesus refused the offer, answering with complete honesty: ***And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*** In refusing the lie, Jesus signed his own death warrant. Based on Jesus own words, the Jewish Council ruled him to be worthy of death.

They needn't have bothered with the false witnesses. Dying to pay our sin debt was what Jesus came to earth to do, and he did it willingly. He came to earth to keep the law perfectly, and then to offer that perfect life on Calvary's cross. God in his Word now promises us that whoever believes that Jesus has paid their sin debt will be saved. That's how we are saved – not by our own goodness, but by our God-given trust in the goodness of Jesus Christ. That's the gospel in all its simplicity. That is the truth that brings us forgiveness and life.

Knowing this as you do, only one thing can rob you of that priceless treasure: The Lie. Recognize therefore every lie as exactly what it is – a great and hideous evil that Jesus came to defeat. And thank him, every day, that he did. Amen.

Weekly Hymn and Sermon Schedule

February 14

Hymns: 140 (1-4)
367, 263

Lenten Theme:
"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of the
Upper Room"*

Text: John 13:1-17

February 21

Hymns: 388 (1-3, 6)
143 (1-5), 261

Lenten Theme:
"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of
Gethsemane"*

Text: Mark 14:32-42

February 28

Hymns: 358, 171 (1-5)
260 (1, 4 & 6)

Lenten Theme:
"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of the
High Priest's
Palace"*

Text: Mark 14:53-64

March 7

Hymns: 652, 371 (1-6)
258 (1, 3-5)

Lenten Theme:

"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of
Pilate's Court"*

Text: Mark 15:1-15

March 14

Hymns: 360, 155
463 (1-2, 8)

Lenten Theme:

"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of the
Streets of
Jerusalem"*

Text: Luke 23:26-31

March 21

Hymns: 153, 176
448 (1-2, 5)

Lenten Theme:

"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of
Golgotha"*

Text: Mark 15:22-32



St Paul Lutheran Church

Lent 2018

"The Battles of Lent"

- The Upper Room
- Gethsemane
- The High Priest's Palace
- Pilate's Court
- The Streets of Jerusalem
- Golgotha

-Please return this bulletin to the Entry Table for use next week-

ST PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E Divide Ave Bismarck, ND 58501

Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson – President Eileen McEnroe – Head Organist

Michael Roehl – Pastor

Mid-Week Lenten Services - 2018

The Opening Hymn (As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)

Invocation

Pastor: *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

All: (Spoken) *Amen.*

Confession and Absolution (TLH 323)

Pastor: *Acknowledging that we stand in the presence of our Holy God we humble ourselves, and in true repentance, we confess our sins:*

All:

1. With broken heart and contrite sigh, a trembling sinner, Lord, I cry.
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free - O God, be merciful to me.
2. I smite upon my troubled breast, with deep and conscious guilt oppressed;
Christ and His cross my only plea – O God, be merciful to me.
3. Nor alms nor deeds that I have done can for a single sin atone.
To Calvary alone I flee – O God, be merciful to me.

Pastor: *Jesus Christ himself has been punished for your sins. God the Father has placed upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. According to His authority, and by His command, I announce to you the divine decree of our God that all of your sins are forgiven, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All: And when, redeemed from sin and hell, with all the ransomed throng I dwell,
My blissful song shall ever be: God has been merciful to me.

The Reading of the Passion History

The Apostolic Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Pre Sermon Hymn (As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)

The Sermon – *The theme for our devotions this Lenten Season is*

"The Battles of Lent"

(Please turn to the back page for this evening's service details)

The Response – (Sung to the melody of Hymn 237)

1. *A mighty Fortress is our God, a trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from every need that hath us now o'ertaken.
The evil Foe means deadly woe;
Great guile and might his arms in fight;
On Earth is not his equal.*
2. *With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the Valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.
This Lord of Hosts is Jesus Christ;
Our Savior-King, our Mighty God.
He holds the field forever.*

The Prayer of the Day

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

P: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God the Father,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

C: *Amen, Amen, Amen.* (Sung by all)

The Closing Hymn (As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)

Silent Prayer

Announcements

[All are invited to remain for fellowship and light refreshments.]