Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

November 18, 2018

Old Testament Reading; 1st Samuel 2: 1-10

Responsive Reading; Psalm 16

Epistle Reading; Hebrews 10: 1-25

Gospel Reading; Mark 13:1-8

Sermon Title: Take Heed That No One Deceives You

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: It is not so much WHAT you do as it is WHY and FOR WHOM you do it.

My heart rejoices in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, Because I rejoice in Your salvation. Talk no more so very proudly; Let no arrogance come from your mouth, For the Lord is the God of Knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed.

Oh Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in night seasons. Therefore, my heart is glad and my glory rejoices.

Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come, In the volume of the book it is written of Me, To do Your will, O God.’

Take heed that no one deceives you. For Many will come in My name, saying, I am He, and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.

OK. If I have you totally confused let us go back to the title of the message and the summary. Title; Take heed that no one deceives you. Summary; It is not so much what you do as it is why and for whom you do it.

Now let me interject a scripture reading that is not from our lectionary. Matthew 6:1-4. “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

A recurring theme that is everywhere in the New Testament is that Jesus does not like hypocrites very much. I think that Jesus is actually harder on hypocrites then he is on the demons he drives out of possessed individuals. The Pharisees are really good at knowing the letter of the law. They are so good at it that they can use the law to rip off widows and orphans and try to prevent him (Jesus) from healing on the sabbath.

Another theme is that we can not possibly praise God more than he deserves.

In our Old Testament Lesson the prayer of Hanna as she dedicates her son Samuel to the service of the temple both praises God and warns of the folly of talking trash about how good an individual thinks that he is.

In the Psalm 16 the praise is heaped on God but total humility is the description of the author.

Our Epistle lesson continues the aforementioned theme. Hebrews goes on to show that the only sacrifice that can make us “perfect” is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The reoccurring sacrifices of animals can never achieve salvation as they represent the law, and the blood of Jesus represents God’s total love for those who were created in his image. Matthew 5:48 “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

That is a scary statement, I’ll get back to it later.

Finally, the Gospel gives the quote that I used as my sermon title. Take heed that no one deceives you. A whole bunch of

wanna-be-prophets will try to tell you when the “end times” are coming but they don’t have a clue.

Let me get back to that statement, “Therefore you shall be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Like all of you I have heard a lot of what I call “Bible Thumpers” ranting and raving things like, “Are you ready to meet your maker and answer to everything you have done in your life?” and, “The end times are near. You can see all the signs predicted in Revelation.” And, “I am a filthy sinner.” And so on and so forth.

Number one, in our Epistle Paul quotes God saying, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days (after Christ ascends to sit on the right hand of God), says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.” Then He adds, “Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Number two, as to the end times, Jesus said, “As to the day and the hour no one knows not even the Son but only the Father.” If Jesus does not know don’t put yourself above Jesus by saying that you do.

Number three, if you are a “filthy sinner” then Jesus died in vain. Jesus traded places with us on the cross to give us the gift of his perfection.

“There are many gifts but one spirit.” You have been given a gift from God. Whatever that gift is just do it. When it comes to building the kingdom of God there is only one carpenter and we are just the tools that carpenter uses. The point is it does not matter which tool you are. A saw is just as necessary as a hammer. The important thing is not what you do. The important thing is why you do it.

Don’t do it to glorify yourself but to glorify the one who deserves all the praise.

That brings us to the one. The one is the three in one. The Father and Creator, The Son our Lord and Savior, and friend and to the Holy Spirit that connects us all to our triune God.

As the weather report on the Albion Presbyterian Church said, “God reigns and the Son shines.

Hallelujah and Amen