

August 22, 2010 (Pentecost 13 C)

Jeremiah 23:23-29

“The SECRET of being able to spot the TRUTH:”

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Wouldn't it be nice to be able to spot the truth, and see through the lies – *all the time*? It sure would make it a lot easier to buy a used car. It would make parenting easier. It would give you an advantage in the workplace – especially if you're a teacher, police officer, or border guard. They have lots of training (and usually experience) in spotting someone who is lying – but still, no one sees through everyone, and always knows perfectly who is speaking the truth . . . *well, except for God*. The LORD, speaking through His servant **Jeremiah** the prophet, reminds us that *NOTHING* gets by Him: **Jeremiah 23:23-24**

²³ **“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.**

People *lie* all the time for all sorts of reasons, because they feel it benefits them in some way . . . but GOD sees through it all and always knows the truth. This all-knowing / all-powerful / all-truthful LORD has a special treat for us, his people, today. He's going to share with us the *secret of being able to spot the TRUTH*.

As human beings, we have limits. Our brains are only so big. We can't see through time, or see into someone else's thoughts. We could never have the ability to know and spot the TRUTH in any and every situation – God knows that. So, what He (in His wisdom) decided to do was narrow it down to just the most critical and important issues in life – where it's vital that we know the TRUTH. He's given us the secret of being able to spot the truth in matters of extreme importance and eternal consequence.

Whether or not someone is trying to sucker you out of a few thousand dollars when you buy a car . . . is no where nearly as important as being able to spot when someone is trying to sucker you out of your soul and steal your eternal salvation. God cares MOST about our souls and our salvation – so He gave us what we need to know to keep them safe.

When it comes to matters of spirituality / God / faith / the origin and nature of the universe / eternal salvation . . . there are no shortage of deadly lies around us. In fact, the world is swimming in spiritual dishonesty. Back at the time of **Jeremiah** people were being enticed by Baal worship. It was a perverted and wicked cult where people worshiped little statues of bulls thinking they would receive all sorts of blessings. *Ridiculous!* Well, people believed it. Lying prophets came along and said, “*God says this, and God says that . . .*” And, they were lying, and confusing people, and trying to cover up the true voice of the true prophets.

Today there are all sorts of religions all over the place. A growing number of people actually believe the story behind “Star Wars” and consider themselves “Jedi” – *ridiculous!* Well, people will believe just about anything. Many even claim to have moved past religion thinking it's all just a bunch of made-up nonsense and they are all the same. In this new religion there is no “god” and people actually believe we're a cosmic accident left over from a big explosion, so there is no real meaning or purpose behind anything. *Ridiculous!* Well, people believe it. There is no shortage of people out there who (whether or not they even know it) will tell you all sorts of **lies** about the most important things in life.

Thank God we have the *secret of being able to spot the TRUTH* in these matters! God tells us what we need to know through **Jeremiah** in the remaining verses of our first lesson:

²⁵ **“I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, ‘I had a dream! I had a dream!’ ²⁶ How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? ²⁷ They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. ²⁸ Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” declares the LORD. ²⁹ “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”**

Did you catch the secret?

God's powerful WORD will tell you the **truth** and expose the false prophets and lies – so that you and I can have absolute certainty regarding the most important issues in life. Just consider what the priceless Word of God allows you to see the truth about:

1. There is only ONE God out there, and He is TRIUNE: One God revealed to us in 3 Persons – the Father / the Son / the Holy Spirit.
2. The REAL God is a God of justice and truth. He hates sin and evil, and will NOT tolerate it in His presence; it is the opposite of who He is. Unfortunately for us – sin infects each and every one of us from conception and we are ALL, by nature, objects of God’s wrath. (see Psalm 51:5 and Ephesians 2:1-10.)
3. But, this same God is a God of unimaginable LOVE and mercy. He came up with a brilliant plan to rescue us from the guilt of our own sin – by sending a Substitute and a Saviour – Jesus Christ, who would willingly step forward to be the sacrifice for all our sins, and the sin of all humankind. This Jesus is God and Man in One – He died and rose again, and – He is the Key to eternal salvation, and everything depends upon our relationship with Him.
4. By faith (and through the waters of Holy Baptism) we are BONDED to Him as members of His own family – having eternal treasures (by His grace) that are more valuable than anything on planet Earth.
5. This same God and Lord has given us wisdom, teaching, guidance, and direction – for every aspect of life, and for every challenge we’ll ever have to face.

The WORD of God is the **Truth** and the greatest treasure we could ever have. The Word of God is all about Christ – what He did to save us. In fact, the **Apostle John** tells us in the beginning of his Gospel that Jesus **is** the Word – the Word of God became flesh. Jesus not only spoke the truth, He claimed to BE the truth. (see John 14:6).

When people, therefore, accuse God’s Word of being unclear, contradictory, confusing, outdated . . . when they twist, deny, distort, abuse, mock or forsake the Word of God – they are directing ALL of that at HIM / at Jesus. Even we (His people) can so easily explain away, ignore, set aside . . . or downright deny the Word of God. And, as our lesson tells us, when we do that – **we’re playing with fire**.

- *“Let us not give up meeting together . . .” (Hebrews 10:25) . . .*
Ughh, I don’t feel like going to church today, forget it. I’ve got more important things to do – like sleep.

- *Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of GREED . . .” (Luke 12:15) . . .* Oh, I can love God and love money at the same time. There is nothing wrong with spending 80% of my time chasing the dollar, 19% of my time on hobbies and recreation – and, if He’s lucky, God and His work might get 1% - that’s more than enough.
- *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world . . .” (Romans 12:2) . . .* I’m quite capable of blending nicely in with this world, even though it means I have to keep my faith limited to Sunday mornings, and times when I’m alone – you know, so I don’t offend anyone.
- *“[always] speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) . . .*
Well, that doesn’t apply to me, I speak the truth *most of the time* – when it suits me, out of love *for myself*.

God’s Word busts **us** to pieces and reveals all that wretched sin lurking within our hearts. We think like that, and we are no better than anyone else in this sin-sick world. Once God has broken us to pieces in repentance, then we see the Word itself (or, should I say – HIMSELF) dying on the cross to set us free from all that guilt and making us into people fit for eternal life . . . people like HIM, and nothing at all like the world around us.

HE is love. He is truth. And, if we know absolutely nothing else at all – we’d better know the **truth** about HIM. By God’s grace – you do. You know the **secret of being able to spot the TRUTH about the most important things in life – it’s God’s Word**. You’ve discovered that Truth, and are getting to know it / getting to know HIM better all the time, as you continue to study and grow in your faith.

The TRUTH is powerful. The TRUTH sets us FREE. Use that power in your life – share that power and don’t be afraid to expose the lies of evil that hold souls captive, in love for them. God’s Word crushes us, and brings repentance, faith, light, truth and salvation. God help us **share** the TRUTH – His Name is Jesus. The Word tells you all about Him and sets us free for all eternity.