

**Sermon Series: “New Testament Postcards”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—1/27/2008**

**Title:** “Why bother to battle?”

**Text:** The book of Jude

**Intro.: Ills.: Artificial Bells**

**Theme:** We pray that enemies of the gospel will never infiltrate our ranks with destructive doctrines and lifestyles; but if they do, we must be ready to fight for our beliefs and stand firm in our convictions that Jesus’ salvation is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

***Be aware of the spiritual landscape around you (Print and read Jude vss. 1-4)***

- Jude, half-brother of Jesus and end of 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian leader, saw the pagan influence on the young Church
  1. Stealthy creep of heretical teaching intertwined with Christian faith (syncretism) (Gnostics, Platonic, mystery)(4)
  2. Dumbed-down moral equivocation with regard to perversions in society/false religions adapted into church
    - a. “Strange flesh”– “*indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh*” vs. 7 – ‘nothing new under sun’
    - b. *It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles. 1 Cor. 5:1*
- Not that today’s Church faces more threats than past but The pressure to go-along-to-get-along is at an intensity pitch
  1. Secularism — guilty pressure to put up and shut up – provide social services but don’t “preach at us”
  2. Postmodernism — Christianity has no right to claim to be the only truth among so many other religious truths
  3. Pragmatism in morality — end justify the means in love/marriage/sex, beginning/end of life issue, ethics

***Why all the fuss?***

- Because false teachers/teaching in our midst can bring about certain doom and destruction (**Print Jude 5-7**)
  1. **Ills.: Don’t try this one!**
  2. A carelessness and trifling with the grace of God — end result justifies the means leads to temporal/eternal consequence
  3. Challenging authority and disparaging it and leading others to try spiritual dangerous stunts with God
- Because real, anti-Christian teaching/practice are not always recognizable on the surface (**Print Jude 8-10**)
  1. Irreverent tongue which jokes about God and his holiness (comedy and media)
  2. Pompous/boastful speaking of things while being spiritually ignorant (Christian talk circuit)
- Because world-friendly religion is empty and will suck us dry (**Print Jude 11-13**)
  1. Empty religion of rites, rituals, traditions – focused on form not on substance
    - a. Hidden reefs in their love feast; Shepherds who only feed themselves; Clouds w/o water, doubly dead trees
    - b. *“A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit....So then, you will know them by their fruits.” Matthew 7:18-20*
  2. Leads to bankrupt faith among the faithful and arguments and speculation over “stupid controversy”
    - a. *But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 2 Tim. 2:23*
  3. Responsibility of every believer to stand guard and select godly leaders of the flock
    - a. **Ills.: Misplaced Modesty**
- Because “*eat, drink, and be merry philosophies*” numb us to preparation for Jesus’ return (**Print Jude 14-16**)
  1. Watch for extremes, from constant fault-finders to the promiscuous hedonists, which take us off task and off-focus
    - a. **Ills.: Seeing Life Through Smudged Lenses**
  2. Humbleness toward God and toward each other is the mark of a Christ-centered fellowship of believers

### ***Final instructions for the troops***

- Remember the training manual (**Print Jude 17-19**)
  1. If those who lead us from Christ are ignorant of God and His Word (10), we need to be all the more equipped (17)
  2. *From among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert. . . And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20: 30-32*
- Keep in shape, spiritually! (**Print Jude 20-21**)
  1. Build up your faith through personal, small group, and corporate Bible study opportunities and praying in the Spirit
  2. Guard yourself in God's love — live under God's grace and by God's grace
  3. Wait anxiously for Jesus to return
- Don't neglect to show mercy on the war-torn (**Print Jude 22-25**)
  1. **Ills.: Stumbling Horse Recovers to Win Race**
  2. **Print verses 24-25**

### **Artificial Bells**

A church in Naperville, Illinois, in the western suburbs of Chicago is boasting new bells in their belfry. Since the church was built two decades ago, the congregation has held off on its plans to hang bells in a large open space above the sanctuary. Due to limited funds, the congregation suggested mounting a cross in the space or a series of liturgical banners that could be hung according to the seasons of the church year. In conjunction with the church's 25th anniversary, the church finally found the means to spring for three bells to fill the vacant hole. They are beautiful. However, you'll never hear these bells peal on Sunday mornings (or any other day of the week for that matter). And it doesn't have to do with city ordinances or complaining neighbors opposed to bells playing hymns. It has to do with the fact that the bells aren't real. They don't have clappers. Although they look authentic, they are made of resin. **Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois**

### **Don't try this one!**

Chicago's O'Hare Airport. Almost everyone had gotten their luggage, but there was one man older than Ted slowly making his way toward his bags, which were just behind Ted's on the conveyor belt. Ted figured he could beat out the older man and grab his bags before they cycled through the canvas flaps into the back room. Ted's health condition makes him a little shaky on his feet. As he reached for his bag, he became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell onto the stainless steel snake carrying his bag. So there he was, flat on his back, hanging tightly to the handle of his suitcase over his head, and riding the conveyor through the flaps into the darkness beyond. Several thoughts were going through his mind: I've been wanting to do this for years. I could get arrested. Now is probably not the best time to get off. So he rode the belt, still gripping his suitcase, till he and his bag passed through the flaps again into the light. At this point he looked up into the face of an official-looking woman who said, "You're not supposed to do that!" To which he replied, "Have you ever tried this?!" And she bellowed, "No!" And he said, "Don't!" Then he swung his feet to the floor, tightened his grip on the suitcase handle, stood on the edge of the conveyor belt, and walked off. Life is like that sometimes, isn't it? Somehow, without ever intending to, you fall on this moving belt gripping your bag, and now you can't get off. Even though you're not going where you want or where you should, you just can't get off. **Lee Eclow, Vernon Hills, Illinois**

### **Misplaced Modesty**

What we suffer from today is humility in the wrong place. Modesty has settled on the organ of conviction; where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself but undoubting about the truth. This has been exactly reversed. **G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy (Ignatius Press, Reprint, 1995)**

### **Seeing Life Through Smudged Lenses**

An elderly man lay in a hospital with his wife of 55 years sitting at his bedside. "Is that you, Ethel, at my side again?" he whispered. "Yes, dear," she answered. He softly said to her, "Remember years ago when I was in the Veteran's Hospital? You were with me then. You were with me when we lost everything in a fire. And Ethel, when we were poor—you stuck with me then too." She replied, "Yes, dear, I do remember those times." The man sighed and said, "I tell you, Ethel, you are bad luck." **Our Daily Bread (1-18-00)**

### **Stumbling Horse Recovers to Win Race**

It happened in just a blink with a quarter mile to go at the 2005 running of the Preakness. Afleet Alex had battled his way to the front of the pack when another horse cut in front of him, and their heels clipped each other. Afleet Alex stumbled, his knees buckled, his nose nearly went into the dirt, and his jockey, Jeremy Rose, hung on. "That's the closest I've ever been without falling. I thought for sure we were going down," Rose said. "The thought process was, I was going to get run over. Luckily, he came right back up underneath me." Afleet Alex not only recovered, he went on to win the race by nearly five lengths. The Bible sometimes refers to the Christian life as running a race in which we all stumble, and yet if we hold on, the Lord provides us sure footing and balance so that we will not fall. **Dave Long, Sanger, California; source: "Afleet Alex Averts Disaster," [www.msnbc.msn.com](http://www.msnbc.msn.com) (5-23-05)**

### **Jude 1:1-25**

Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup>May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. <sup>3</sup>Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. <sup>4</sup>For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

<sup>5</sup>Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. <sup>6</sup>And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, <sup>7</sup>just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

<sup>8</sup>Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. <sup>9</sup>But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" <sup>10</sup>But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

<sup>11</sup>Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. <sup>12</sup>These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; <sup>13</sup>wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

<sup>14</sup>It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, <sup>15</sup>to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." <sup>16</sup>These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts;

they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

<sup>17</sup>But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>18</sup>that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." <sup>19</sup>These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.

<sup>20</sup>But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup>keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

<sup>22</sup>And have mercy on some, who are doubting; <sup>23</sup>save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

<sup>24</sup>Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, <sup>25</sup>to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. [NASB]