

Evil Inside? (The devil made me do it...)

Reconnect – November 14 2010



Text: John 8:31-47, Ephesians 4:17-27

Key Thought: A close connection with God and his people lets us successfully see through the devil's lies.

Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me. Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies. So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don't believe me! (John 8:42-45, NLT)

Intro: Bully for everyone



Q: What do you think of when you think of the devil? Words... images... feelings

(horns, pitchforks, sulphur and brimstone, lies, battle, hell, fear, fascination, etc.)

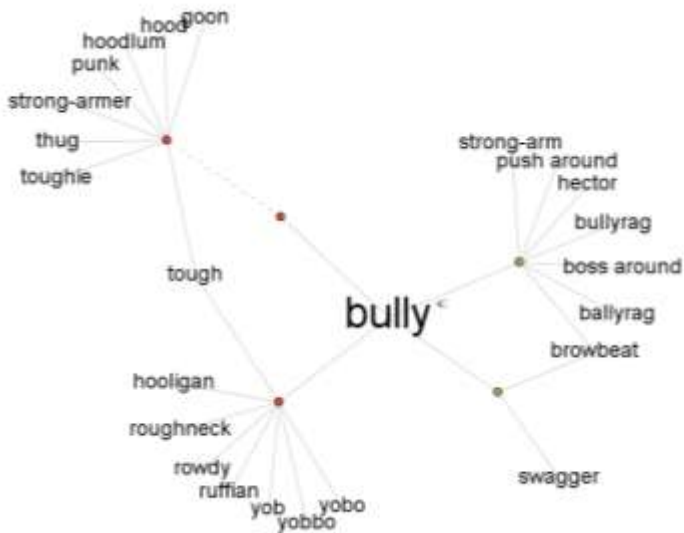
Q: How does the devil get portrayed in popular culture?

(tired, misunderstood, funny, creepy, sexy, a woman, scary, in control, fearsome)

- so many different ways that the devil has been portrayed, talked about, examined, but this morning I want to key in on one that I think does a pretty good job of summing up our interaction with this being



- it's a bully
- Bully: (definition) (from www.dictionary.com)
 1. a blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who habitually badgers and intimidates smaller or weaker people. **(noun)**
 2. to act the bully toward; intimidate; domineer. **(verb)**
 3. to be loudly arrogant and overbearing.



Q: Ever been bullied? Keyed on? Picked on?

- sometimes there's a reason – the other person is jealous, or sees you as a threat, or you're in direct competition over something or someone
- but other times, it doesn't seem like there is any kind of reason that would actually make sense – it's senseless and brutal
- Having someone "out for you" is one of the worst feelings in the world, isn't it?
- No matter what good might come, you're always thinking that they might be there to spoil it

- Bullies are definitely NOT cool right now – schools and workplaces alike are full of “anti-bullying” campaigns, to try to let people live free from fear and threats and intimidation
- And while there are different schools of thought on bullies, there is one more fact about them: generally they are cowards through and through – miserable, pitiful, screwed up cowards – and they CAN be stood up to successfully – at the heart of what they do, there is a lie
- “Don’t look at the man behind the curtain” (from The Wizard of Oz)

The “liar of liars” (father of lies):

- At the heart of it all, all the fear and intimidation and worry and stress and poor choices, there is a lie
- That’s definitely the devil, according to Jesus
- He was the one that hung the famous nickname on him – the father of lies – the liar of liars, the creator of lies, the one who brings lies to life – that, Jesus said, is the devil
- In the section of Jesus’ biography that we read earlier, he is actually talking to a group of people who DO believe in him – some good, wholesome, acceptable people who are doing their best to live a good life and do things right – and they like what He’s saying
- But then Jesus cuts deeper, and they get pretty offended pretty quickly
- He wants them to see that they have been lied to, just like the people that they would see as being spiritually “lost”, far from God – that they are in this just like the rest of us
- And they don’t like being told that one little bit – in the course of a few moments of debate, they go from being quiet supporters to being ready to kill Jesus – because they would rather maintain the lie that comforts them and defines them, than embrace the truth and the change that comes with it
- They have been lied to, and they bought it, and they don’t want to take it back – even if that means believing something ridiculous, like up is down, or that Jesus is not from God



Liar, liar:

- The devil is still very much in the lying business today, even if culture and society has changed – as one translation of this section says, “He lies because lies are his native language”
- I see (at least) four areas in our lives that the devil peppers with lies to try to pull us aside
- I’ll throw out an area, and then ask you to tell me some examples of lies he tells:

About ourselves: (Q: How?)

- (we are powerless, up is down, right is wrong, there’s nothing wrong with us, there’s everything wrong with us, that we can never change, that we are unloved by everyone, including God, that we are alone)

About other people: (Q: How?)

- (we are outsiders, others are different or we are, others don’t like us, others envy us, others are out to get us, others look down on us)

About life: (Q: How?)

- (that this – what we see, taste, touch, hear – is enough, that this is all there is, that everything is going to be OK no matter what, that no real, lasting change is required on our part, we deserve to be happy)

About God: (Q: How?)

- (that He doesn’t love us, that He’s not real, that He can’t help us, that He is not like we think He is, that He’s cruel, distant, not interested)
- In short – lies about everything and everyone

Q: Do you see any pattern in those lies?

- (fear is a big component, isolation, keep us from the truth, a little bit of truth mixed in the lie – that’s the worst kind of lie, or “best” – and keep it hard to verify for sure – and leave yourself an “out”)
- The devil is the greatest liar that the world will ever see (thankfully) because he invented it
- And that’s the thing – largely, but not completely, this is a smoke and mirrors campaign – this is Parliament Hill politics – it’s all about perception and making someone THINK something – reality has absolutely nothing to do with it
- For example, the devil doesn’t need to make us hate God – although that is sometimes useful to Him, especially if we are dangerous to him (the devil, that is) –it’s enough for him to keep us from any kind of interest in God – why “beard the dragon”, after all?
- And we go on about our business, day after day, not realizing that we are trapped on the island of the Sirens, slowly starving to death as we listen to beautiful music day after day, and can’t hear God calling to us – we are blissfully unaware

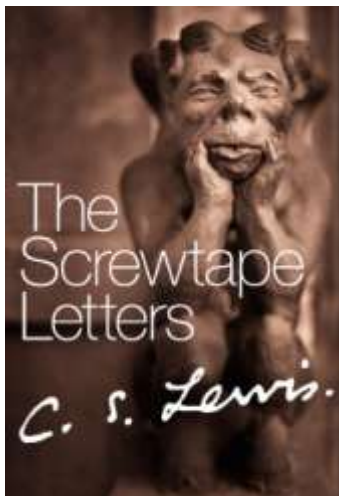
The Tool of Ignorance:

- That kind of ignorance is another of the enemy's tactics

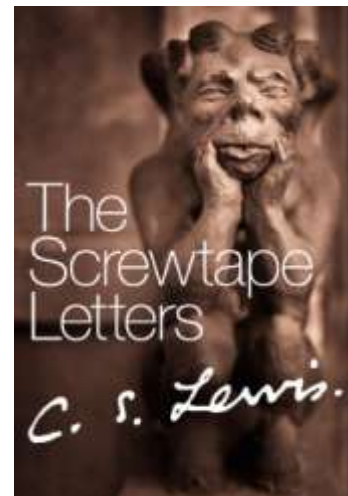


- Imagine someone was out to get you – we call people paranoid who believe that they are being watched, that they are being monitored, that someone is trying to make them fail or fall short, that they are being sabotaged on a daily basis – and yet, that's what the devil is always trying to do to us
- But do we realize it? And if we do realize it, well, we generally fall into a different trap
- As C.S. Lewis famously said in his Screwtape Letters,

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."



"The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."



"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." - C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

- And he also would say, of the OTHER approach, in the same book,

"The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts." - C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

- The devil is very happy to either have us believe too much in him or not enough – he doesn't care, so much as the end result is that we are lost to God and that we willingly separate ourselves from Him



The Devil is Steven Seagal? (Aikido)

- If you were a child of the 80's like I was, then you were a young adult of the 90's – and that means that you probably sat through a Steven Seagal movie or three
- When Seagal burst onto the action scene, he was something different, because his fighting style wasn't the traditional karate or kung fu or even brawling – it was very different
- His discipline was called *aikido* – a Japanese martial art that involves using angles and hand speed to your advantage, so that you are actually able to use your enemy's strength against them
- You don't need to be stronger than they are – you can use their own great strength against them, and the stronger they are, the harder they fall – it's incredibly effective with the right training
- And that's a big tactic of the devil's when it comes to you and I – he uses our own God-created, God-given needs, desires and loves against us
- As Cam said last week, temptation is using something that could be good – the cheese in the trap – to ensnare us in something bad, to get us to give up who we are, who God has made us to be
- It's the strength of our desires that gives us our success, that helps us overcome our troubles and our problems, that lets us find a way forward and love our families and friends deeply and sacrificially
- But it's also the strength of our desires that sees us fall again and again and again to sin against our enemy

Satan?!?



- That's actually what the word "Satan" means – it means adversary – enemy – nemesis
- The section of the Bible called First Peter says that the devil goes about like a roaring lion, looking for people to devour, one lying bite at a time
- What can and can't the devil do?
 - thoughts in your mind but doesn't know your thoughts
 - observe but not always there
 - a poor copy of God, a wannabe – "fell like lightning from heaven" – sin of pride, wanting to be like God (at least, that's what most people think), one of the chiefs of heaven
- The things the devil does/loves – tricking us into hurting ourselves (i.e. suicide of the daughter of a Sens coach – everything to live for – WE can see that, but she couldn't – the web of lies
- We wonder why it gets harder when you become someone who declares for God – before that, you weren't on the radar – you were a spectator, not a player – but now you're a player and that means you better keep your head up – hockey players don't generally bodycheck the people in the stands, but if you're on the ice, you're going to catch it
- God in his love and mercy protects us from many of the devil's attacks, but at the same time, he wants to grow us so that our capabilities and capacities will one day match our desires to love Him
- And when we make a series of choices to leave His side, His protection, we expose ourselves to the harm that the devil wants to bring us
- We would never get into a van if someone offered us candy – we're too smart for that – but we will believe the lie that the devil tells us about our best friend dumping us for someone else, or our spouse being out to get us, or that we're entitled to be happy no matter what

TAKE IT HOME:

A close connection with God and his people lets us successfully see through the devil's lies.

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—



truly righteous and holy. So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbours the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. Ephesians 4:17-27, NLT

Key Thought:

A close connection with God and his people lets us successfully see through the devil's lies.

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbours the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

Ephesians 4:21-27, NLT



Conclusion: Facing down the accuser

- The devil is called many things in the Bible – we've looked at Satan, “adversary” and father of lies
- But there's also destroyer - evil one - your enemy - god of this age - the one who leads the whole world astray - the tempter
- And of course, the devil: slanderer, accuser

- that's his character and his chief strategy, as Erickson says in his Christian Theology – more of the bully side, the dirty, guilty feeling that we get when we are accused, even if we are completely innocent – “THERE'S THE GUY!”
- Ever have that happen? Ever get a phone call from someone – or better yet, have someone pull you aside with a “Can I talk to you? and a serious look?”
- Am I the only one who thinks that it's always going to be something bad? That they're going to yell at me? That's I'm in trouble, what have I done, that kind of thing?
- Even the hint of being accused hurts – so much more what he does day in and day out, accusing us before God, before us, before the people around us, anyone who will listen
- And if we're not careful, that much accusing can make us feel dirty in God's eyes, all the time
- Unless we fight that lie with truth – and one of the great ways to fight the devil is to imitate Jesus and how He dealt with the devil, when the devil tried to tempt Him
- What did Jesus do? He used the Bible – He quoted and reminded everyone involved of the truth was – as He came to destroy the devil and his works, according to First John
- It's what destroys lies and dispels the fog, and it's available to us
- Listen to these verses that we all need to hear this morning:

James 4:6-8 - Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.

II Cor. 4:4... “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the glory of the gospel of God”

I John 4:4... “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”

Revelation 20:10 – the devil's ultimate end in the lake of fire, prepared for him and his angels

- we need to take him seriously, but not fear him – ignore him but not be ignorant of him
- he cannot make us act against our will – the power is in our hands, but he is a master of using our strength against us and making us hurt ourselves – to trick us, to pull our strings
- But Jesus died to destroy his shell game – and we have put our trust in Him

Response: prayer (multiple leadings)