

Youth Sunday at St. Martin's Episcopal Church

May 29, 2016

Sermon given by Michael Luck (age 16)

My name is Michael Luck. I am one of the teenagers here at St. Martin's. And today I am talking about staying on the right path.

The Epistle for today is a letter from Paul to the churches of Galacia. Paul says in his letter that,

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but that there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!"

We are all faced with false gospels every day of our lives.

The Gospel as spoken by Wall Street tells us everything can be measured in money. It teaches us that people are a means of production like coal, iron, or oil. *"It teaches the price of everything, but knows the value of nothing."*

The Gospel as spoken by the television tells us to escape. Reality television teaches us that bachelors will find their wives in a competition and that love is a spectator sport. It also teaches us that life is about material possessions. Other shows trivialize violence too, and make life seem less precious.

The Gospel as spoken by our politicians teaches us that to get to the top, you must lie and cheat. It teaches us to emphasize our differences, and separates us from each other. It preaches fear and hate. It tells us that saying bad things about someone else to get ahead is ok too.

When I say gospel, I'm not talking about a physical book in this case like Paul did, but decisions given to us each day.

When I first read this, I thought of something a parent or a guidance counselor might say.

I didn't interpret this literally, but instead it made me think of the times my parents told me *"no matter what somebody tells you to do, don't do that!"* Like, if someone tells you to take a pill at a party or to look at a website that your parents might not be too thrilled about, you probably shouldn't follow them.

Paul talks about obeying the true teachings of Christ. And to ignore unauthentic versions of the gospel. This doesn't just apply to what your parents want, but to what Jesus would want you to do. In a way, the Bible is like a map that helps you stay on the right path and make good decisions. Different people interpret this map differently so we each go down different paths. Unless you get lost, we all end up at the same place, too. Paul disagrees, and says that that we must go down the same path.

If two people do what they think is right but make different decisions, are they both on the path to God? I think so. And unless they know that they are on the wrong path, they will not get lost. Just like your GPS yells at you repeatedly to make a right turn if you have turned left, God tries to get you back on the right path, just a little differently. If you have made a bad decision, you cannot fix it, but you can learn from it and not make it again. Paul says to listen to the true Word. But who is to say that we do not all listen differently?

We each try to listen to our truth, and even when we make mistakes, we have the voice of the Holy Spirit in us to help keep us on track.

Amen.