

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Tenth Sunday After Trinity, August 24, 2014**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 292, 260:3-4, 261, 449, 447.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 6: 10-15, Ephesians 6:10-18, Matthew 12: 22-30.

Sermon Text: 1 John 2: 18-19

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

A good parent wouldn't dream of letting children grow up without warnings. A Christian father and mother are constantly concerned about their children stumbling into sin, falling into danger, getting into trouble, and are constantly praying that their children be kept safe from all evil, harm and danger. You pray daily to "our Father who art in heaven" and ask him to "deliver us from evil".

That concern goes beyond our own children also to fellow Christians. We pray those things also for those who confess, believe, and teach as we do. But people don't always want to hear those warnings. People don't always want to hear what God-fearing preachers must say. For that matter, people don't always want to hear what any Christian tells them when you speak God's Word to them. And of course in a nation which has a constitutional guarantee of "freedom of religion", it is increasingly "politically incorrect" to speak warnings against any religion or any lifestyle or just about anything anyone chooses to do. But Christians must be reminded of the Word of God from Second Timothy where St. Paul warns Timothy, as a younger pastor, and also all Christians: *"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."* (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

Every Christian will want to truly be God's servant and properly proclaim God's truth. As unpopular as it may be, Saint John today warns us

**WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS**

1. We are in the last days.
2. Many antichrists are around us, attacking the truth of God's Word.

John warns us desperately, *"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come."* But notice that he speaks in affectionate terms. He addresses his hearers as his dear little children. He does not say these words in a spirit of hatred or vindictiveness. This warning opens with a reminder of our fellowship with God, reminding us that we are sons of God.

Jesus warned us very bluntly in our Gospel lesson *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."* (Matthew 12:30) In another context, Jesus told his followers gathered on the hillside, *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."* (Matthew 6:24) You cannot serve God and something else – anything else. If you are not with Jesus, you are against him.

John makes it clear that this will happen until the end of time, from the day he wrote these words by inspiration of God until Jesus Christ comes in judgment on the last day. He goes on to say that ***“antichrist”*** and ***“many antichrists”*** ***“went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”***

“Anti” means “against”. To show you how people could use the word “anti”, let me give this example. If you care passionately about a football team, you are against or “anti” their opponent. If you are on the side of the Minnesota Vikings, if you are “for” the Vikings, you will be against the team they are playing, or anti.

Now of course to be anti-Christ is immensely more serious than simply opposing a sports team. To be anti-Christ leads to eternal damnation, not just disagreement or disapproval from other humans. When John speaks of antichrists here he is speaking of those who disagree with, who attack, who hate the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said ***“He who is not with me is against me.”***

When it comes to that football game, you may be neutral, and not really care too much who wins that football game. When it comes to what God teaches us and wants us to know and how to live, we dare not be neutral or indifferent. John warns against indifference or apathy especially in Revelation chapter 3, but we must save that sermon for another time. That, however, is deadly – to be neutral – when it comes to Jesus Christ. Saint John warns us in the book of Revelation about indifference, using the word “lukewarm”. ***“To the angel – that is, ‘to the messenger’ – of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”*** (Revelation 3:14-16)

Because it is the last hour, we must watch out for antichrists! Beware of antichrists! John identifies them this way: ***“They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”*** He is warning against those who may have once been Christian, or may even now claim to be Christian but really aren't.

2000 years after John wrote these words by inspiration, we can safely say that every sign of the last days has come. John especially speaks of antichrists coming as fulfillment that this is the last hour.

A common assumption among people for centuries has been “they read from the Bible” or “they use the same hymnal”, therefore they must teach and believe the same as we do. Wrong! How many churches don't many people consider “Christian” yet those churches tolerate or even teach that Jesus Christ is not true God?

And it is easy to think “well, aren't they going to heaven too?” But anyone who is against Jesus Christ in any way is an antichrist. He or she does not stand with Christ but against Christ.

When a Lutheran church teaches in its seminaries and textbooks that Jesus Christ may have been the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier, that church is really anti-Christian – against Christ!

Ultimately, we must say that anyone who in any way rejects any biblical teaching about Jesus Christ is anti-Christian – against Christ! That is the harsh reality. When we hear of leaders of churches that claim to be “Christian” who say that atheists who are trying to do their best may be in heaven, we must recognize that person is really anti-Christian, is really an antichrist.

As believers in Christ we confess and believe and teach that faith in Jesus Christ is the way, the only way to receive eternal life. We teach that Jesus Christ is, as he said, ***“the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** (John 14:6)

Thus a Christian is conscience-bound to speak against evil, and against wicked men, and against all who oppose Christ, particularly when they claim the flag of Christianity as their banner.

John has offered us some strong words of warning. They are hard even for us to hear and accept in an age when people are urging toleration for any and every religious belief. In our nation people are free to believe anything they want. But we must follow our Lord Jesus Christ and speak what he speaks – and only what he speaks – when we talk about God, sin, heaven, and eternal life.

John tells us that in his day many antichrists have already come. He and his contemporary believers in Jesus Christ had already encountered antichrists. He even tells where they came from. For some reason or reasons, they left the true church, that is, the church that followed the whole truth of Jesus Christ. But they were still masquerading as Christians.

They have gone away and they are not coming back, except to try to deceive true believers in Christ. They were going out into the world, going back to a world whose spirit is the spirit of antichrist, whose spirit the faithful have heard was coming and now is in the world.

Perhaps they had never believed, but for various reasons had allied themselves for a time with the Christian movement. They had once belonged to the community of Christians but have left it.

We find the same kind of thing today. People, even leaders of visible churches, tell us that it really doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere. If that is the case, then you will go to a 'better place' after you die. But that is simply not true. Don't we hear all kinds of variations of that idea? Can't people find any excuse for leaving a church that proclaims and seeks to practice the Word of God in its truth and purity? God plainly says "**Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.**" (Mark 16:16) It is not our job to judge whether or not one has faith. It is our job to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in our way and avoid them. (Romans 16:17)

The last days of the world was ushered in with the coming of the Savior in the flesh, and John, in using the terminology of God, properly calls this period the last hour, for it is a short, a very brief time until the Lord will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. We do not know when Christ is coming again.

Christians in John's day, just as in our day, saw, heard, and were brought into contact with many false teachers and their followers whose doctrines and practices did not agree with the eternal truths of the Gospel. These he calls, by inspiration of God, antichrists. All these signs of the end, of the last days, were present, even to the Christians of the early Church.

Jesus himself warns us against false prophets with the words "**By their fruit you will recognize them.**" (Matthew 7:16)

John echoes that idea with the words "**They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.**"

We do not need to fear these evil people because the Holy Ghost shows us their errors through the Holy Scriptures.

But we must teach God's Word clearly and carefully, especially for the weak members among us so that they won't fall prey to those teachers who "**come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.**" (Matthew 7:15) And we must know God's Word to teach it. Yes, these are the last days, the last hours! Lord, preserve us! "Lord keep us steadfast in Thy Word! Amen.