

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
MINOCQUA, WI
SERMON FOR JANUARY 22-23, 2023**

My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.

³ This is how we know that we have known him: if we keep his commands. ⁴ The one who says, "I know him," but does not keep his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ If anyone keeps God's word, the love of God is truly made complete in him. This is how we know that we are in him: ⁶ The one who says he remains in him should walk as Jesus walked.

⁷ Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one that you have had since the beginning. The old command is the message you heard. ⁸ At the same time, the command I am writing is new—it is true in Jesus and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. ⁹ The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and nothing causes him to stumble. ¹¹ The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

(1 John 2:3-11 EHV)

You're on a plane to Hawaii. You're taxiing down the runway. You've got your seatbelt on. You're settling in. You then hear the voice of the pilot as you're beginning your ascent: "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to flight 1492 with service to Honolulu, Hawaii. Our cruising altitude will be 32,000 feet, and we'll be showing a movie." You think, *That sounds good.* But then the pilot says: "By the way, folks, I'm not so sure about this whole fuel thing. The gauge indicates we don't have enough fuel to reach our destination, but don't worry about it. I feel really good about this. We may even have the wind at our back – that'll help. I have all these navigation devices up here too, but I'm not going to use any of them. There's more than one way to fly a plane, and folks, I believe that all paths lead to Hawaii. We'll get there somehow. By the way, I'm very sincere about this. I believe this with all my heart." How you react to that? Wonder what the movie is? Where's my drink? No, there's a lunatic in cockpit!

Yet, people do this very thing with their spiritual life, their journey to heaven. Doesn't really matter what you believe, we'll all get there. There can't be just one exclusive way to get there. And I can get there on my own – I'm a good person, certainly better than a lot of other people I know. Besides, God knows I mean well, that I'm sincere. That's lunacy that lands us far from heaven.

By the grace of God, we know what we believe and why. There is only one way to heaven. Jesus Christ is the only way. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. God lays this out for us very clearly in his inspired, error-free Word. Our question for today is, "So?" Does this make a difference in our daily lives? **HOW DO MY BELIEFS IMPACT MY LIFE?**

The first impact/difference is the most fundamental. A Biblical worldview reminds us who we are. John writes: *My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*" (v. 1) You/I are sinners. Pretty gracious statement "*if anyone does sin.*" If. If? More like when, as in, when are we not sinning? When are we not piling up a creative but devastating/damning resume of sin? We do it every day, countless times in thought/word/deed. If all those misdeeds and missteps were exposed for others to see, for the world to see... But God sees them all – every willful transgression of his commands and laws, the ones we know about, and the many more we don't.

Imagine standing in God's courtroom as the evidence of your sinfulness is presented to the Judge, God himself. Imagine trying to explain away by blaming, rationalizing, excusing, comparing, and finally even

blaming God himself “You made me this way.” Suddenly in this courtroom, an Advocate steps forward – **“an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”** And he says, “Father, I’ve atoned for this one. His sins are covered by my blood. He’s with me. She’s mine.” The pounding of the gavel emphasizes the amazing verdict: “Innocent.” **“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.”** (v. 2)

What a difference this makes. You are forgiven, redeemed, restored through faith, part of God’s family – all his doing. To have this belief/worldview means to be confident/assured. God has taken care of our greatest need, he will surely take care of us and see us through everything else: health, relationships, economy. You are a dear child of God! Forgiven, not forgotten! Loved, not left behind. Assured that **“nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 8:39)

And be sure to note that the sins of the whole world have been atoned for! That means that everyone you meet is someone for whom Christ died, someone who needs to hear and believe this good news. Yes, even the guy who cut you off on the way to church today (Sunday!). This belief, this worldview affects our outlook on life, gives us confidence, affects how we live/what we say.

Which leads to the second impact/difference spoken of by John. **“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”** One word: integrity. It’s more than honesty. What integrity means is wholeness. It’s all together. It comes from the word “integral.” Integrated – integer – one unit in mathematics. It’s the whole, the opposite of compartmentalizing your life.

What integrated or integrity means is your life is all the same. You don’t act one way with one group of people – like this is how I act at church, this is how I act with my hunting/fishing buddies, this is how I act when we’re out for a girls weekend, this is how I act at work and this is how I act at home. You wear different masks and you fake it and you pretend. You play roles and you’re a hypocrite. That is a lack of integrity. It’s when you segment/compartmentalize your life.

You can be honest and still lack integrity. Why? Because you could be honest in one area and have another area of your life that’s all messed up. And you’re not really doing anything about it. IT’s fine. It’s OK. I keep these parts of my life separate. I compartmentalize.

You’ve heard of the Titanic myth. That before the Titanic all of the boats made had one integrated hull. They were all one unit. So if a ship ran into an iceberg it knocked a hole in it, the water came in and it sunk the ship. So the Titanic was supposedly unsinkable because they got this idea: “We’ll just compartmentalize the hull. We’ll put it into segments. If the ship happened to run into an iceberg it could theoretically take on water in a certain number of compartments but it wouldn’t sink the ship.” That sounds logical. But a hole in the boat is a hole in the boat is *a hole in the boat!* It’s going to sink eventually.

Let’s say you and I are in a rowboat out fishing and I pull out a drill in my end and I start drilling a hole in the boat. You say, “What are you doing?” “It’s my end of the boat. I’m not hurting you. This is my own space.” No. It’s going to sink the whole boat. A hole in the boat is a hole in the boat is a hole in the boat and it’s going to sink the boat. What hurts me, hurts others.

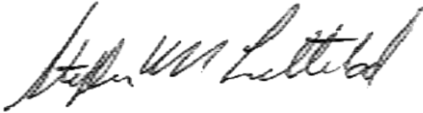
You may be saying, I’m drilling a hole right now but it’s not going to sink my family. It’s not going to sink my business. It’s just one little segment of my life. You are dead wrong. When you compartmentalize your life into this is my public life and this is my business life and this is my private life and these are my secret thoughts, you are setting yourself up for a lack of integrity. Your life isn’t all integrated, it’s not all together, whole in Christ.

Perfection’s not going to happen. But we live in repentance and forgiveness and strive with God’s help to do what he commands, to obey his word, to do what v. 6 says: **“The one who says he remains in him should walk as Jesus walked.”**

This is impact/difference number 3 of a Biblical worldview: to walk as Jesus walked, to live as Jesus lived. Don't just talk a Christian game, do it, live it, walk the walk. What does this mean? There's so much to say here. Limit ourselves to three things: 1) Walk in light, not in darkness. John provides an example of this: ***"The darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is still in the darkness. The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and nothing causes him to stumble."*** (vv. 8b-10) 2) Be selfless. Think of others. Put others first. Love others. Which is what Jesus did and does. And the only way we'll be able to do such things is 3) to remain in his Word. ***"If anyone keeps God's word, the love of God is truly made complete in him."*** (v. 5)

People who walk like Jesus hear the Word at every opportunity AND obey it. When tempted, people who walk like Jesus ask God for help in fighting temptation. People who walk like Jesus don't leave here and leave the Word behind. Take it with you in both head and heart. So you really walk with Jesus, align yourself with his steps, his choices, his love, his heart, and become more Christ-like every day.

Your beliefs impact your life and the lives of others. You are a forgiven child of God. Live with integrity. Walk as Jesus did. Following God's lead will take you a lot further than following the world's lead, even into eternity. Walk with Jesus. Lean on him. He'll never let you down. He's carried you this far. He'll carry you forever.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen Luchterhand".

Pastor Stephen Luchterhand
Minocqua, WI