



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

February 12, 2017

"Voldemort Is Real" (Real Faith for Real People Series)

The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:9 Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Our passage begins with kind of an eerie verse.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Here's the deal with the devil. He is NOT everywhere. He does not have that ability. He's not under or behind every rock and tree. So don't be neurotic. Thinking of him as omnipresent just gives him more power than he really has. You don't have to fear him.

On the other hand, if you don't believe in the devil's existence, then he has won half the battle already. Your choice to not believe in him gives him more freedom and less resistance to work his evil schemes in your life.

The devil is real. All four gospel writers in the Bible wrote about him. Even Jesus

believed he exists. Jesus encountered him.

Many non-Christian cultures talk about the devil--Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and in South and Central America, to name a few places. Yes, there is a personal evil in this world that is actively working against us. The devil.

He goes by other names – Satan, Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness, the Evil One, the deceptive Angel of Light.

I contend that most people either don't believe in the devil or think he has little or no effect on our lives, our homes, our offices, our neighborhoods, communities, our country, and the world. Yet, the Bible tells us of the devil's existence. There are more than 100 references about him. But most people ignore him.

Even in popular folklore, there is a belief that people can just ignore him. We see this in the *Harry Potter* books. The Satanic presence in the *Harry Potter* books and movies is a character referred to as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.

That's what we tend to do in our gatherings, isn't it? The devil must not be named or talked about or else people will think we're weird. When was the last time you were at a party or having dinner with friends that people talked about the devil? It's just not done because either people think he is not real or he is irrelevant to life.

We talk more about flat tires, the price of gas, movies, politicians, what

countries or corporations are doing or not doing. It's rare to have conversations about Satan and how we should fight his influence in our world.

When I read of how state governments like ours this year want to legalize the sex trafficking industry by giving more power to pimps and people who pimp their loved ones, I think that is evil. When I read of our state legislature thinking of passing a bill that makes prostitution legal, reversing much of the good work that people in our church have done to protect human trafficking victims, I don't think that is from Jesus.

In the *Harry Potter* stories, You-Know-Who's real name is Lord Voldemort. Here's a movie clip from *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, where, like the fire of the Holy Spirit, Harry's calabash uncle Sirius appears to him in a fire to warn him about Voldemort. (Movie clip was shown.)

The movie continues with the children and students forming an army to defend their school against Voldemort since the sophisticated adults don't really believe that Voldemort is on the move against them and the world.

The Bible takes the view that not only is Satan here on this planet but he also has taken it over. He influences people, governments, corporations, and is actively playing on people's pride and lust for sex, power, and money. He doesn't sit idly by. In fact, the Bible describes Satan as:

Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

How graphic is that? He is a roaring lion actively prowling around not just to look around and survey, but to devour as well. Pity Christians who are ignorant of him or are apathetic toward him.

When I read the history of genocides, whether in Bosnia Herzegovina between Serbs and Croats, or in China between the Japanese and Chinese, or under Chairman Mao - Chinese versus Chinese, or between Turks and Armenians, or what is happening in Aleppo, Syria, or in the Congo or in India, or the KKK in the USA, there is more evil involved in these killings than what humans can do; there was a supernatural evil that fueled these racist genocides.

I do believe Satan is alive and well working against us in our families and communities. He is not just out there in some Neverland. He is a roaring lion taking as many victims and hostages as he can. And once he gets a hold of us, he can create pockets of weakness or beachheads or bases in us (which are called "strongholds" in the Rooted course that over 200 of us are taking). It means our wrongful anger or lust or selfishness can be taken to supernaturally destructive levels. Like rats to garbage, he goes in on us when we don't act in a Christ-like way.

For example, when we don't forgive someone and hold onto that bitterness and anger in our hearts, it can be a foothold for Satan to wreck our lives. The Apostle Paul specifically talks about how unforgiveness gives Satan power over us when he wrote to a church in Corinth:

2Cor. 2:10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ.

2Cor. 2:11 And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

When we don't forgive, Satan uses that unforgiveness and outwits us. Same for anger.

The Bible says, *"Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. (Eph 4:26-27)*

As I said recently in a sermon we should not refer to God as the Man Upstairs because that makes him a distant God, nor should we refer to Satan as you-know-who or he-who-must-not-be-named because Satan should be named and be known for the evil he brings us.

So at this point you might be thinking, "Boy, this is a downer sermon." Or as former boxer Robert Duran once said, "No mas, no mas! No more pummeling of us about this, Dan! Enough warning! Where is the hope? What should I do if Satan is real? How can I defend myself and my loved ones?"

Let's look again at our passage from the Bible today and other passages for guidance and strength.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:9 Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Right there is a manual for safety on how to fight Satan. You don't need to be fearful for greater is Christ who is in you than Satan in the world. First verse, which we talked about, there is a devil. And The Bible says basically the devil is a fallen angel because he decided to fight against God. Some Bible scholars say Satan took a third of the angels with him to fight God, Jesus, and the other angels.

So he is not another God. He is an angel, a fallen angel. The Bible says he is not ugly or hideous, nor does he have horns and a pitchfork, but rather He is a beautiful angel, who masquerades as an Angel of Light, even though he is an Angel of darkness.

As the Bible reports: *"And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." (2Cor. 11:14)*

So this makes it really hard in this world where we might think the beautiful, popular, and powerful, the ones wearing the white hats are good, and the ugly ducklings that look evil, who wear the black hats are bad. Not necessarily so. With Satan, it's opposite day! This is why we need discernment and wisdom in this world of who is of the Holy Spirit and who is of the Dark Side.

Our Bible verses today say we can resist Satan. That is good news. We have the power from God to RESIST evil. We don't have to capitulate and surrender. But how do we resist?

Look at the first two verses for the principles of fighting evil and winning: We have to submit ourselves to God, draw near to Him, and He will draw near to us. "Submit ourselves to God" means we need to be all-in for Christ. Not halfway, not most of the way, but all the way in. What we do with our social life, financial life, family life, professional life, they all need to be all in.

The areas we are not all-in are the cracks in our armor where the prowling, devouring lion will go and claw and bite us hopefully mortally wounding us.

My mentor Bob Munger, who married Pam and me, once wrote a booklet called *My Heart—Christ's Home*, meant for children and adults. It's now a book, and it has sold more than a million copies. Munger used a house and all its rooms as a metaphor for our heart.

He asks readers if they would take Jesus throughout all the rooms of their heart so that He is truly the Lord of their life.

Bob Munger asked, "Will you take Jesus with you into the THE LIBRARY of your heart's home – where Jesus would look around and see all of the books and magazines you are reading? Would you be proud or embarrassed to show Jesus all of the literature and internet stuff you are reading or watching?"

Then would you take Jesus into your DINING ROOM and know that Jesus offers us more than the food we eat?

Then there's THE WORKROOM. Would you show Jesus your workroom or basement, representing your occupation? Is Jesus the center of that?

Then there's the REC ROOM. Would you take the Lord Jesus to all of your social events and activities and associations? Or are we embarrassed on how we act in some of those and don't want Him there?

Then there's THE HALL CLOSET. Would we allow Jesus to know our deepest secrets?

And in this house is also THE LIVING ROOM.

When Jesus is really present in all of the rooms of our lives, then there is no room for Satan's influence, where the devil can fill our head with lies.

Satan is known as the deceiver and the father of lies. HE is the one who speak to us and says, "you are not smart enough, pretty enough, handsome enough, popular enough, accomplished enough. You are worth nothing. In fact you are so inadequate you need to drink more, eat more, do more."

But Jesus and His angels can push out the dark forces of those thoughts. But it starts with us having a friendship with Jesus.

Let me read to you from the book *My Heart Christ's Home* just one excerpt when Jesus walked into a person's Living Room. Hear this as a Christian is taking Jesus into the rooms of his heart.

"[Jesus and I] walked next into the living room. This room was rather intimate and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a bookcase, sofa, and a quiet atmosphere.

"Jesus also seemed pleased with it. He said, 'This is indeed a delightful room. Let us come here often. It is secluded and quiet and we can have fellowship together.'

"Well, naturally, as a young Christian I was thrilled. I could not think of anything I would rather do than have a few minutes apart with Christ in intimate comradeship.

"He promised, 'I will be here every morning early. Meet with Me here and we will start the day together.'

"So, morning after morning, I would come downstairs to the drawing room and He would take a book of the Bible, open it, and then we would read together. He would tell me of its riches and unfold to me its truths. They were wonderful hours together.

"In fact, we called the drawing room the 'withdrawing room.'" It was a period when we had our quiet time together. But little by little, under the pressure of many responsibilities, this time began to be shortened. I began to miss a day now and then. I would miss it two days in a row and often more.

"I remember one morning when I was in a hurry, as I passed the drawing room, the door was ajar. Looking in, I saw a fire in the fireplace and the Lord sitting there!

"Blessed Master, forgive me. Have You been here all these mornings?"

"Yes," He said, "I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you." Then I was even more ashamed. He had been faithful in spite of my faithlessness.

"I asked His forgiveness and He readily forgave me.

"He said, 'The trouble with you is this: You have been thinking of the quiet time, of the Bible study and prayer time, as a factor in your own spiritual progress, but you have forgotten that this hour means something to Me also.'"

Wow, it means a lot to Jesus if we could spend some daily time with Him talking to Him, and reading the Bible.

You see, the key to fighting Satan is not to be an exorcist but to be centered in Jesus and spend time with Him so that you know His voice. We become better followers of Jesus when we recognize His voice. A lot of that will come from reading the Bible, praying and conversing with Christians of what life means.

That is why our Small Groups ministry is so important. The average Christian won't make it in this world without a REGULAR meeting of dialogue with other Christians. On our website you can see the many small groups we offer and you can join any time. Call our church if you are having trouble finding a group.

There are so many things in our lives that lead us more to Satan than to Jesus. Instinctively you might know what those cracks might be – it might be the area of anger, or lack of communication, lack of forgiveness or gluttony or drink or food, or porn, or laziness, or incredible self-centeredness.

These then can be openings for the Evil One to creep into, fill in, and fortify. They make it hard for us to change instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to flow into our lives so that our bodies and souls can be strongholds FOR Christ, a word mentioned many times in the Old Testament.

Now there is great news in the next verse that says: *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” (James 4:8)*

That is such good news! If I were to run to God, draw near to Him and say, “Help! I need your power, I need your strength, I need your Holy Spirit, I need you,” the Bible says He will draw near to us.

Wow! God is a God who responds. As the book I read to you earlier said, “Go to the drawing room where Jesus draws near to us!”

This is super big. He is not a God who just listens and says, “Okay, I’ll take that under advisement.” No, HE draws near to us and says help is on the way.

You know, when my kids or friends are in trouble and draw near to me, I try my best to draw near to them if they reach out for me for help. If my kid is in trouble and calls me up long distance, I drop everything and draw near to them. If they need money, I send them money. I not only draw near, but I draw out of my checking account (though I don’t want to be an enabler.)

If a friend is in trouble, and calls me up and in a sense draws near to me, then I try to make time to draw near to them and help them out also with my time or resources. Now none of us are all-loving or omnipotent or omniscient and we can’t always do that. But God who is omnipresent, omniscient and all-loving can!

Part of the deal is that when we draw near to God, we must be able to articulate to God everything about what is bothering us. I know this can be hard for all of us. For us men, it can be really hard.

I shared how two years ago after we voted to leave our denomination that I had overextended myself and I went into a depression that lasted two months. I had not gone through that before. I tend to be super up all the time, which by the

way, is not fake. I am naturally high. (Who needs medical marijuana?)

But when I went through my depression, I decided to reach out to six friends. But I didn’t tell them I was depressed. I had not shared with them clearly what was happening to me. I was just trying to get some time with them one-on-one so that I MIGHT tell them that I was depressed.

Unfortunately, when I called each of them, they all had good reasons why they could not meet with me, either out of town or busy. Maybe a few of them didn’t return my calls. Of course, when one is depressed, this makes things worse! It made me feel like I had no friends.

By the way, one of the signs I knew I was depressed was because I could not think of one thing I had ever done right in my life. If you have or are feeling that, know that kind of irrational thinking is a sign of depression.

So I decided to call a therapist. And as luck would have it, the therapist didn’t return my phone call, which made it worse. I really didn’t have friends.

But what started to pull me out of it was when I said to a high-achiever friend one day, “Have you ever felt depressed?” It was all that I could say to hopefully hint to find someone to talk to. And he said, “You mean, when you don’t feel like getting out of bed?”

I was stunned. My friend was one of the most accomplished and confident people I knew. He’s so capable. But at that one moment, I realized, oh my, he knows! He knows what it is like. And he told me more about his depression.

On another day I asked another highly accomplished person, “Have you ever felt depressed?” And she also said yes. I asked her how long it lasted for her, and she said two months. And I thought, she knows what I am feeling.

You see, as I drew near to them and risked showing my vulnerability, they drew near to me and shared with me their vulnerability and empathy. And that helped greatly.

Friends, if humans can draw near to us when we draw near to them, don’t you think God, who is all-loving, will draw near to us if we draw near to Him? After the intense suffering He went through for us, don’t you think Jesus would have both empathy and understanding if we drew near to Him?

A recipient of criticism and hate? Oh yeah, Jesus got that from the Pharisees. Betrayal? He got that from Judas, one of His 12 disciples. Injustice? Oh yeah, he got that from a bad judicial system and Pontius Pilate. Lack of understanding? Jesus got that from His parents when He was young and from His own disciples as an adult. Lack of money? Heck, he had to be supported by several rich women. Depression? What did Jesus say on the cross? “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?”

That has got to be depression. Feeling so alone, so dark, so full of despair and in tremendous physical pain.

When we go through difficult times, Satan loves to jump in on that and make us feel there is no hope. But there ALWAYS is hope.

Our James 4:8 passage talks about cleansing our hands. In a sense, when we come to the realization that we are not as strong as we are, and that we are in a spiritual battle with Satan, then we need to come clean. We need to cleanse ourselves from the pride that makes us think we are perfect or we don’t need help from friends or from God. That kind of overconfidence or arrogance dirties us. It is toxic. We need to come clean and even admit we are doing things we shouldn’t and we need help.

The passage talks about turning our laughter into mourning.

I think what James is saying there should be mourning about the old-self that tries to be so perfect and image conscience, and to let that old-self die. Yes, turn into a mourning that we are sinful, and selfish at times and that we need help.

For it is in that mourning that humility comes that says there is a battle in this world. We are not perfect, and there is a supernatural personal evil out to get us and our friends and family. We need to tighten up, get the core muscles of our spirituality firmer, and get more disciplined about our faith. We need to be committed to go ALL-OUT because if we don't, all might be lost. There is an enemy out there hoping and doing all he can so that we don't.

We need that humility that says, "I need God, and I especially need His power and strength and protection from the Evil One."

There is a letter that Peter the fishermen wrote that is in our Bible. It's called 1 Peter. Peter, you remember, knew that danger of Satan, for once when Peter foolishly told Jesus He would die, Jesus said:

Luke 22:31 "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat,

Luke 22:32 but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

See, that's great news. Jesus Himself is praying for us that Satan will not win us over.

And no matter what your setback, tragedy, depression might be, then we can get so strong we can strengthen our other brothers and sisters.

Peter learned this truth, even though he was the one who betrayed Jesus at least three times. But then he finally got it. And

so he wrote this in our Bible in 1 Peter, which says.

1Pet. 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.

1Pet. 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

1Pet. 5:8 Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.

1Pet. 5:9 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

1Pet. 5:10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.

1Pet. 5:11 To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray.

Lord, in our fight against evil and Satan, may we know that You are much more powerful than he. You are God. Satan is just an angel. And you have thousands and thousands of angels on Your side who are also on our side.

So come Holy Spirit. Fill our hearts that they will truly be Christ's home. Send your angel armies that together we might reclaim this world for you.

In Christ's name, Amen.