



Pastor Hanke's Blog

June 10, 2018

The Upside Down

Bible Reference: Mark 3:20-35

Sometimes I debate on what example to use in a blog. I will have an inner battle with myself and list out all the reasons I should or should not talk about something. Many times, after listing it all out, I end up convinced that I should go ahead with the example. This week's topic was no exception.

First, let me say that no one wants to talk about spiritual warfare. The simple explanation is because we don't understand it. For those of us who believe in Jesus, this unknown is more confirmation of God's existence; He must be the only one who can understand it. The unbeliever will either try to explain the phenomenon, or just walk away from it. Right now there is a Netflix series that tries to explain pieces of this unknown, even if it is fictional. Many are drawn to it. It's called Stranger Things. When I was a youth pastor I found that whether the youth had watched it or not, they all knew what it was and what it was talking about, much to their parents chagrin. Now, I am not encouraging you to watch this series, since for most this would not be your cup of tea. I am just stating that in the same way we'd rather not think about the world displayed in Stranger Things, we also don't like to think about spiritual warfare. Yet, that is exactly why I felt I should talk about it.

It didn't take long watching this series before I made the connection that this was an explanation for spiritual warfare; "the upside down" (as it is called in the show) is a fictional way of referring to it. For those who haven't seen it, here's a brief explanation. In Stranger Things, the characters find a world that looks exactly like the world we are used to, except that it is grey and foggy and has demons who are looking to break into that world and steal the characters away, bringing them into their demon world. (The Stranger Things fans are going to be frustrated with how easily I boiled that down, but for our purposes, that is all that matters.) The greatest problem is that most of the characters in the show, just like people in real life today, live like the spiritual realm doesn't exist. But it is very real.

Here is where the analogy breaks down—in Stranger Things the good is people. In real life, we know that people are not inherently good, and only God is truly good. He is the only one who can truly illuminate the upside down intentions and provide victory over them for us.

In Stranger Things language, the upside up (which, for the Christian, would be God) is our only chance at victory.

This is where our reading for this weekend picks up. Jesus had just freed a demon-possessed man, and the people don't know what to think. They can't understand it. On one hand, Jesus looked like them, needed sleep like they did, and had other basic needs just like they did. But then, He does something outside of this world, something that no one else could do or even understand. The only way people could make sense of it was to say that Jesus must be a demon himself, pulling His power from that upside down world. Jesus tries to help the people understand by asking if He was trying to pull them down, why would He also free them from the entrapment of demon possession? So now we, like the people in Bible times, are left to wrestle with the fact that there are demons out there, and what does that mean for us? There is beauty in this question, because as uncomfortable as it may make us feel, it makes us dependent on Jesus! This Sunday we will talk about how spiritual warfare makes us more aware of how much we need Jesus!

God's Peace,

Pastor Will