

**“The Devil”**  
**City Church Knox**  
**1 Peter 5**  
**01/28/23**

**Nice words about City Church.**

**Recap of Series.**

**1 Peter 5:6-11**

**Time of Silence.**

### **INTRO HOOK**

**Don't Look Up.** A couple of years ago Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence starred in a movie on Netflix called **Don't Look Up**. In the movie, Lawrence's character, Kate Dibiasky, an astronomy student at Michigan State, discovers in her research a comet that is set to collide with and destroy the earth in about 6 months.

And that kicks off the main plot point, where Kate and her professor Randall Mindy (played by DiCaprio) travel around the world trying to convince whoever will listen that the world is going to be destroyed unless something is done.

**But much to their frustration...no one will listen.**

- The white house makes fun of them.
- They go on TV shows and the hosts make jokes at their expense.
- It's one awkward scenario after another – no one will take them seriously.

Here they are shouting into the world – “You're in very real danger!” and everyone responds at best with general apathy and at worst with laughs and shoulder shrugs and jokes at their expense.

Now, for a variety of reasons I am very much not recommending the movie, I just wanted to start there because I think it's a pretty good picture of how it can feel to preach in 2024 about who the Scriptures call “the devil”, spiritual warfare, and knowing how to resist what the Bible calls the spiritual forces of evil.

### **IMMANENT FRAME**

**And I think a big part of why it feels that way is because living with an awareness of a spiritual world and spiritual realities, good or evil, is a seemingly impossible reality in the modern world.**

- There's certainly a small portion of Christians today who may be too focused on the devil. Everything is a work of Satan – he's making my car break down. He's running the government. You know.
- But for the most part, whether theologically or functionally in our everyday lives, many of us are more prone to forget about him at all.

For the vast majority of human history, up until really the middle of the 18th century, the prevailing belief, whether you were a follower of Jesus or not, was that a spiritual realm existed and had an impact on our lives.

But over the past 200 or so years, due to a variety of reasons...

- The rise of secularism as the predominant belief system in the western world
- The invention of new technology bringing with it life hacks and the ability to manage whatever comes our way
- The elevation of the scientific method making just about any phenomenon studiable and explainable
- The predominance of humanistic philosophy – aka a “humanity-centered universe”

So on and so forth we now live, the world you and I occupy is dominated by what philosopher **Charles Taylor** calls “**the immanent frame**”.

That the default for us in our society – it’s like secondhand smoke, it’s just the air we breathe as we go about our lives – is not belief in the transcendent, supernatural or spiritual, but rather the default belief is that life consists in what is right in front of us, right here and right now.

Author Mike Cosper picks up on this idea when he writes – **“I am programmed to expect that the world is what I can see, touch, and measure, and any thought or idea that runs against that expectation is met with resistance...I don’t think I’m alone. I believe that most people experience something similar - a subtle-but-strong resistance to faith and a skepticism toward anything that veers toward the supernatural.”**

Everything in the world around you is going to position you to a default setting of skepticism towards anything transcendent, or supernatural, or spiritual.

**Let me just show you this with a few examples...**

- When you have a headache, what is the first thing you do?
- What about when you’re feeling tired, anxious, or depressed?

**Let’s get a bit more serious (and also these are rhetorical)...**

- What advice do you give when a friend comes to you about difficulties in their marriage?
- How do you counsel a LifeGroup member who can’t seem to gain any ground on their particular addiction or sin struggle?

If none of the answers you would give to those questions involved anything to do with the spiritual or the supernatural...I’m not saying you’re wrong... (there is nothing wrong with medicine, breathing techniques, naps, communication tips, or strategies for fighting sin)...

But if your response to those scenarios does not include the transcendent spiritual realities of good and evil in the world, it’s just a good indicator that you’ve been disciplined into the immanent frame of our secular society.

And that’s what makes our time together this morning a bit difficult. Because it’s one thing to be able to affirm the existence of the devil in a theoretical sense – it’s a whole different battle to not feel crazy if you bring up resisting the evil one as a part of your everyday life as a follower of Jesus.

### **WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?**

**Now...why is that a problem? To have a worldview that does not readily and functionally account for the spiritual forces of evil. For a very real enemy known in the Scriptures as the devil.**

***First, to have a belief system that does not account for the devil, is to have a different belief system than Jesus.***

***Jesus, talked about the devil, alot.***

- Matt 6 – “Deliver us from the evil one.”
- Matt 13 – “The enemy.”
- Luke 22 – “Demanded/Desired to have Peter”
- John 12 – “The ruler of this world”
- John 8 – “Liar” + “Murderer”

*Second, you can't resist an enemy that you forget about.*

Or, I'll put it this way at great risk of sounding like an old baptist preacher – You don't have to believe in the devil for him to attack you.

**And Peter, as we'll examine in our passage today, is very clear – the devil is seeking to devour and destroy the people of God. And so if we could over the course of the next few minutes try to take the blindfold off and the earplugs out, I want to help us understand what the New Testament has to say about this danger, this threat of evil, and what that will mean for learning to pray and commune with God in asking for deliverance.**

So turn there with me if you're not already. **1 Peter 5.**

**I want to work through this passage and I want to try and answer 4 questions:**

- 1. Who is the enemy?**
- 2. How does the enemy work?**
- 3. How are we vulnerable to his attacks?**
- 4. How do we resist him?**

#### **1 Peter 5:6-8**

**6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

#### **Question #1 – Who is the enemy?**

Peter, in the text, calls him “the devil.” Now, this might surprise you...but devil is not a name, it's a title. It's actually one of two titles given to, who the Scriptures call the enemy of God. Hell and evil personified in a being who has existed in opposition to God from the very beginning of creation.

**He has two titles in the Scriptures.**

- **“Ha Diablos” – The Devil** – means the **slanderer**. The **liar**. The one who lives to lie and spread false information about God and humans and reality.
- **“Ha Satan” – The Satan** – It's a role or description that means “the adversary, the opponent, the accuser,” or as one scholar put it, “the hostile one.”

So although we have essentially used the word “Devil” or “Satan” as a proper name for him over time, if we were to be most accurate in our speech we would actually say “the Devil”, “The Satan.”

***And by that what we would mean is the enemy, the adversary, the opposer, the one who is hostile to God and hostile to people who are made in the image of God.***

This is the enemy that Peter addresses in 5:8 – your enemy, your adversary. He is anti-everything good, anti-God, anti-truth and reality, anti-image bearers and anti-creation.

#### **Question #2 – How does the enemy work?**

**8 Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

Now, I don't want to over-extend Peter's metaphor of a lion here, but I do think there's a picture he's trying to paint of how the devil works – it's not nearly as overt as we might think. He's like a prowling lion. A hunting lion. Hiding among the bushes, watching his prey. Sneaking along. Waiting.

In other words – He is much more sneaky and much more subtle than we think.

**But let's get this more on the ground.** What does this actually mean he's doing as he's seeking to “devour the people of God”. Or as Paul puts it in Ephesians 6 – *what are the schemes of the devil?* What is the game plan of our enemy?

There is a clue in his titles – ha diablos – the liar. Ha satan – the accuser.

How does the devil work? Very simply – *lies*. Deception. Unreality. False accusations and false ideas.

Here's how Jesus talks about it. Look with me at **John 8:44** – **You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**

He is a liar, who exists to deceive the people of God leading to their destruction.

**John Mark Comer** – **“Lies, that come in the form of deceptive ideas, are the devil's primary method of enslaving human beings and entire human societies in a vicious cycle of ruin that leads us further and further east of Eden...One way to think about temptation is to see all temptation as the appeal to believe a lie, to believe an illusion about reality.”**

How does He lie? The Bible tells us...

- **Gen 3 – He lies about the trustworthiness of God.** The one who would lie to us and get us to question God's goodness and kindness.
  - **That part of you that would say something like “I know God is good, but...” that is a scheme of your enemy.**
- **Rev 12 – He lies about our standing in Christ.** John calls him “the accuser of our brothers.” The one who would seek to stand over those of us who are declared righteous, holy, and clean and forgiven because of faith in Jesus and say “nope, not good enough.”
  - **That part of you that believes “I've trusted in Jesus but there's still stuff I have to do to earn God's love” – that is a scheme of your enemy.**
- **Matt 4+13 – He lies about the emptiness of sin.** The one who would press on your sin nature, the already inside of you wicked desires you have, and entice you to follow them, to chase after and look for life apart from God.
  - **When you find yourself thinking – “I know this is not good for me, but...” “I know it left me empty last time, but...” – that is a scheme of your enemy.**
- **Jude – He's the great dis-unifier of the church.** If the way we walk and live in love with other Christians puts the gospel on display for the watching world, the enemy of God and his people would love to disrupt that.
  - **That part of you that refuses to forgive, or suddenly wants to question every motive or action of people in your community group, or the part of you that wants to run from community, or gossip and destroy church unity – that is a scheme of your enemy.**
- **2 Cor 4 – He's the blinder.** Blinding the minds of unbelievers such that they will not worship or turn to God.
  - **That friend of yours who you've been sharing the gospel with for years and they would acknowledge – “yep, that all makes sense” – but they still won't surrender to Jesus – that is a scheme of your enemy.**

And you thought you were just living your life on a Tuesday, going to work, hanging out with your family or your friends, going to the grocery store, getting the workout in.

And that's exactly how he wants you to stay.

**He prowls around. Slowly, sneakily – waiting to devour. Looking for cracks in the opening. Looking for weak spots he can exploit in our lives. Which leads to question 3...**

### **Question #3 – How are we vulnerable to his attacks?**

The Scriptures actually have a lot to say about this, let me just give you two and help show you a theme...

- **Ephesians 4:25-27 – 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.**
- **2 Corinthians 2:10-11 – 10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.**

**Do you see the theme? How are we vulnerable to our prowling, seeking enemy?  
The little, undealt with issues in our lives.**

A little bit of undealt with anger. A little bit of undealt with bitterness. A little bit of withheld forgiveness. A little bit of unconfessed sin. That left-alone and ignored weakness. It's that little foothold, Ephesians says, that little opportunity for the devil who prowls around seeking to **devour**. To **destroy**.

**How does this hit you? Do you see these little areas of vulnerability, undealt with bitterness, anger, unforgiveness?**

- **Maybe it's frustration with your stage of life.** With not getting to the picture of your life you had in your mind that would be true at this age. You just feel like your job is too hard, your pay is too low, your house is too plain, your city is too small, your body is too big, your vacations are too non-existent. And every day you find it just a little bit easier for your mind to drift towards rehearsing your frustration or disappointment or anger or jealousy or envy. And it's a small thing that robs you of joy now, but even worse it's a point of entry that could lead towards much darker, dangerous things for your life and your soul.
- **Maybe it's that your marriage or family just isn't what you thought it would be.** Day in and day out you struggle with the realities of the real life sinful people God has given you vs. the wish-dream you previously had in your mind. On your wedding day you could not imagine anything but a life of bliss and excitement, and then 6 months in you now realize – crap, I married a human. And double crap – I'm a human too. Which means they're messed up, and I'm probably more messed up. Maybe that disappointment is in the process of becoming bitterness, which will open you up to all sorts of paths towards breakdown.
- **Maybe for you unresolved grief is being formed into a foothold that the Satan is going to eventually put his foot on and climb over.** You think it's not a big deal and you keep dismissing it, you claim it's a "godly hopefulness", when really you just don't want to face the pain... but one day you may find yourself totally overrun like a city besieged, where you right now would not even recognize the future version of you that you've become.
- **Maybe it's everything going well for you, which has sort of just lulled you into a state of independence and self-sufficiency.** You've gotten really skilled at managing life without God, and after all, it's going pretty well.

**I've been thinking and reading a lot lately about stage theory.** How do we make progress with Christ through various seasons of our lives? I know it's too early for me to be having a midlife crisis (I know I'm bald, but I'm not that old). But

both for myself and the community that I help lead, it just feels like there's so many of us in, what Ronald Rolheiser calls in his book *Sacred Fire*, "the long middle years". And so I've been just trying to wrap my mind around what following Jesus means with young kids, and building a career, and serving my spouse.

And all the of the inherent spiritual dangers that come in this time. And I find this from CS Lewis so frightening and so helpful.

(Screwtape Letters)

**CS Lewis – The long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather for the devil. It is so hard for these creatures to persevere. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives and the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it – all this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition.**

**If, on the other hand, the middle years prove prosperous, our position is even stronger. Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is "finding his place in it," while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth which is just what we want.**

Don't give the devil a foothold. He's prowling and looking.

SO...

#### **Question #4 – How do we resist him?**

That's what v9 calls us to – **Resist him, firm in your faith.**

This is after all not a series on the devil, but a series on formation. And information alone does not lead to formation. So how do we practically live out an active, steadfast resistance to the lying schemes of the devil?

Peter tells us in the passage:

#### **1. Be humble**

If the devil is a liar, than maybe, just maybe – you and I, caught up in the world we inhabit, still wrestling with the flesh – may occasionally believe his lies. Maybe, just maybe – we are n't thinking 100% clearly about every circumstance we ever encounter, every situation we ever live through, every feeling or thought we ever have.

And we, friends, myself include – ***we trust ourselves way too much.***

So here's what it means that the first step in fighting the enemy is to humble ourselves – ***it means stop trusting yourself so much. Have the humility to be able to say – "Maybe what I think, or what I feel, or what I'm so doggedly convinced of right now is actually wrong. Maybe I'm not seeing the situation clearly. Maybe I'm not as pure-motivated as I think I am."***

**This especially comes up in the context of community. Here's how it goes down:**

- Someone shares something at Lifegroup.
- And the whole group is like – Woah. That's off. Like look at the Scriptures – here, here, and here – this is off.

- Our default response in that moment, I know because I do it too, is to think (you would never say it, you're too nice) – “What a bunch of idiots! They don't understand me. They don't get where I'm coming from. That's not what that text means. That's now what God would say about my circumstance.”
- As if 19 other people are getting it wrong, and we have the cloud-opening ah-ha revelation from God.

Instead of thinking – in humility – maybe I'm believing lies here. Maybe I'm not correct. Maybe I shouldn't trust myself so much here. Maybe I've believed the lies of the deceiver. Let me trust these God given people He has placed around me who have the HS inside of them and are after me looking more like Jesus.

## 2. Be sober-minded and watchful

Be free from intoxicating influences. Peter here doesn't mean too much alcohol, or certain types of drugs or substances or what not – he means free from handing over the control of your mind to something or someone else. If the work of the devil is lies, the battle with the devil is more often than not, in our minds.

*Don't let your thoughts be run by outside intoxicating influences of unreality, lies, and deception.*

### Stealing mail.

- A few weeks ago, I was coming home from the gym, and there was a car parked outside of my house.
- It's like 6am.
- I thought – this is strange, that a 4-runner with a SC license plate is outside of my house.
- So I pull into the driveway, and they tear off down the road.
- And so I get out, and I notice – my mailbox is open.
- This dude was stealing from my mailbox.
- And so instantly – I'm on Amazon – ok, never thought this before but now we need a ring camera. How about 3 ring cameras. Better make it 5.
  - \$2,000? Sure. No problem.

**All of us do whatever we can to protect what is valuable to us.**

Yet many of us don't take the same level of precaution for what God values... which is, among other things, you!

**Prov 4:23 - Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.**

- Be **watchful** about what you allow to come into your mind.
- Be **watchful** about what you are starting to believe.
- Be **watchful** about what you allow to remain in your mind.

## 3. Be diligent to replace lies with truth

The enemy works in lies, but our God works in truth. So to compete against deceptive ideas, we need as much input of truthful ideas as possible.

How do we do that? The grass withers, and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord remains forever.

We starve out these other inputs (we're committed to being sober-minded and watchful about what out here we let in) and we feast on and live in the Scriptures. We let God's Word live in our hearts.

I think about the example of Jesus in Matthew 4. He's in the wilderness, hungry, facing temptation after temptation from the devil and each time – his response is Scripture:

- Make these stones bread – “It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone.”
- Throw yourself off the temple, the angels will save you – “It is written: do not put God to the test.”
- Worship me I’ll give you the world! – “It is written: worship God and serve Him only.”

Lie and deceit – truth from God’s Word.

Listen – this is part of why it is so important to live in the text. To love this book. To dwell in this book. Not to check off some to-do list and feel good spiritually – because the devil is seeking to destroy and his work is lies. And so we need the truth of God to shout all the louder.

**Harper and Norah.** “Do you want some candy? Do you want to watch TV?” My voice needs to be louder and more frequent than Harper’s.

Writer Winifred Gallagher calls this – “the skillful management of attention”. Our screen times tell the truth – our minds are bombarded by junk and lies and deceit and all forms of ungodliness hours upon hours upon hours every single day.

- If we spend 4 hours a day looking at lies, and 5 minutes looking at truth, we should expect to fall for lies.
- We must let the Word of Christ, as Colossians 3 tells us – “dwell in us richly.”

**That’s what you’re going to be doing this week in your practice – listing out, being humble and sober-minded to write down – here are lies I believe about myself: I am alone. My sin puts me beyond the reach of God’s love. If something feels right to me, it probably is right.” And then replacing those, not with good ideas, but with the truth of God’s Word. Here’s what the Scriptures actually say.**

### Conclusion

Let me end our time together, I’m sure I’ve gone way too long – let me end with some encouragement to close up not just this morning but this whole series.

Your enemies are real. The world, the flesh, the devil – they are out to get you. There is a very real threat for your soul from deceitful ideas that play to disordered desires normalized in our sinful society.

**And we should labor and work and strive to resist them. Fight against them. To fight against all their power of deformation and fight to be transformed into the image of Christ.**

**But here’s the good news City Church – we have nothing to fear.**

Look back one more time with me at **1 Peter 5:8-11**:

**8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Movie Endings.**

- I have a really bad habit my friends make fun of me for, that every time I watch a movie, there comes this inevitable point about 20-25 minutes in, right as the tension is revving up, where I pull out my phone and look up the ending.
  - Wikipedia has every movie plot, fun fact.



- I just can't take it. I get so overwhelmed and nervous and anxious, I just need to know how it ends. And so, I self-spoil. No shame, the gospel is true, ok?
- But you know what happens then when I watch movies with my wife, Lindsay?
- She watches like this:
  - What does that mean?
  - What's gonna happen?
  - Did they just die?
- I watch like this:
  - Feet up, head back, as relaxed as can be.
  - And even if there's a moment I get a little bit nervous, I think – Ok, I know what happens next. I know the ending.

***We know the ending.***

Right now – We fight. We resist. We make war against our enemies.  
But we do so without fear. We do so with confidence.

We do so knowing, firm in our souls – that after we have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory in Christ, will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us, under his dominion and rule and reign forever.

***So make war. Resist! And fear not.***

**Let's pray.**