

**Fake Good News - Our Calling to Discern**  
**2 Peter 1:10-15, 3:1-2, 3:17-18**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, a few days ago – for some reason – I got a bit nostalgic and was reminiscing about where I had grown up as a teenager and so I decided to hop on Google Maps to go and visit the old neighborhood.

I probably spent the better part of an hour touring down familiar streets and I could see how much things had changed, in contrast to what I remember of my old high-school, the places where my friends lived, the mall we used to hang out at, and the Mc Donald's where I used to work.

And its funny which memories surface when you see these old places again. The house of a friend brought back the memory of how thrilling it was to ride in his dad's brand new 1985 Honda Accord -??? And the mall used to have a department store called Towers – and I remember buying a digital alarm clock with my own money there (I still have it too – works fine)

And seeing the old McDonalds brought back memories of working as a cashier – in a era where most people still used cash – and how we were trained to handle money and spot counterfeit bills.

I remember our manager told us that if someone paid with a \$50 or \$100 bill that we had to be sure to check it to make sure it wasn't fake. It was our responsibility as cashiers to make sure that our employer wasn't losing money this way.

You see if a criminal can make counterfeit money and pass it off as the real deal to a business, not only can they buy stuff for free – if they are paying with big bills like \$50 or \$100 then they get real money back as change and are making a profit on their counterfeiting.

So, the business is not only losing the cost of the product that was “bought” – but also that additional money from the till you gave out as change.

Now you might say “what’s the big deal? If you get a few fake \$50 or \$100 bills – just keep passing it on so it will still count as real money for you.”

Well the problem is that businesses bring their cash to the bank – and the bank is all about money and they really know their money - so if you didn’t catch any counterfeit cash they certainly will, and then it can look like you are trying to rip them off by knowingly passing on fake cash.

So – as cashiers we had to be particularly diligent to check the \$50’s and \$100’s when someone paid with them to make sure they were genuine.

Which meant that we didn’t pay as much attention when someone paid with a \$20 or a \$10 or a \$5 or – yes even a \$2 dollar bill. (This was back when we had \$2 dollar bills). So if someone was slipping us counterfeit cash in these denominations it could go undetected for quite a while and thus could be even more damaging in the long.

Now I don’t have a lot of knowledge or any experience with counterfeiting money but it would seem to me that there are two ways to go about it.

The first is to go big or go home where you don’t waste time with the small stuff. You would only print the big bills and make sure that you do a really really good job on the forgery so that its as close to the real thing as possible – because big bills get flagged and people will be watching. So, your fake money has got to be good.

The second way would be to fly under radar so to speak, and only focus on the small bills and make lots of them. You don’t have to worry so much about whether they are really good or not because people don’t pay much attention to the small bills and you can pass off quite a lot of them without attracting much attention.

And the other thing that would make a counterfeiting scheme to go undetected would be having someone on the inside.

Someone who worked for a business as a cashier... who would cooperate with you and knowingly accept fake cash, they might even pretend to check it out in front of other employees to make it look more legit and avert any suspicion.

Or even better, someone who was a manager... who would give cashiers the wrong information about how to check for fake cash – or tell them they didn't have to check at all you would be hitting the jack-pot. You would be able to pass off your fake cash to that business... easy-peasy.

Now brothers and sisters – I'm talking about money this morning because that is what God currently has us intentionally going out to bless people with – right? We've got money – cash – sitting in the safe here at the church, and all you have to do is tell me how you plan to bless someone with \$100 in Jesus name and I will give you the cash to go and do it.

Now imagine if that cash was counterfeit?! If it was fake... If it wasn't the real thing.

How would you feel if you had already gone out and given someone fake cash and told them it was a blessing in Jesus name? Or if you had purchased something with it and passed that fake cash on to a business??

Or if you haven't yet done your blessing project – and you find out that we're giving away counterfeit money... would you still be thinking that you would actually be blessing someone and wanting to give it to them, knowing that its fake??

Obviously, that would undermine the whole basis of what this project is about wouldn't it. There would be no blessing in it at all...

In fact, you could potentially put someone at risk of getting in trouble with the law when they tried to use what they thought was real money.

Could you imagine that? Thinking that you've just gotten blessed by someone – getting \$100 cash – and then when you try to use it you get detained by store security and the police

taking you in for questing??? Like they are going to believe that some random person from a church just came up to you and gave you \$100 – right... Talk about a riches to rags story!

Anyways you can rest assured that the cash we have on hand for this project is legit.

But I'm talking about talking about counterfeit money – fake cash - and tying it to our blessing project this morning brothers and sisters to help us grasp and connect with how important it is that the church passes on **genuine** good news in our efforts to bless other people and that we don't get duped into passing on **fake** good news.

Because if we understand this brothers and sisters then we can appreciate the importance and the responsibility each of us have as followers of Jesus Christ to check for counterfeit truths. Just like cashiers have to watch for fake cash – believers have a calling to discern fake truths and point them out as such.

And thus we read in 2 Peter 1:12 *“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.”*

You see – even if we are like *“I know what truth is and I know my bible and I know I'm saved, why do I have to worry about fake good news??”* It is good for us to be reminded of what makes some truths true and how we can spot a fake truth.

Because its easy for us to get busy with our lives and go about out daily business and over time we become less concerned about this responsibility we have, and its much easier for something to slip past us, and maybe it won't affect us – but what about our family? Or our friends? Or those whom we are supposed to be blessing??

Remember, we have an adversary, an enemy, the devil who is constantly working to undermine the truth and deceive us and keep other people deceived. Scripture says that Satan is a liar and he is the father of lies (John 8:44) and brothers and sisters the most effective and deceptive kind of lie... is a fake truth.

Something that looks and sound true, something that contains most of what is true, something that seems to line up with what is right or feels right, and that's why scripture says that Satan can disguise himself as "*an angel of light*" (2 Cor 11:44)

Without realizing it – we can be accepting what we think to be truths into our lives and into the lives of our families and church without realizing that the devil is passing off lies to us disguised as the truth. And if you go back to Genesis 3 you can see how well that worked out for Eve and Adam and its impact on our world right?

So the Apostle Peter writes at the beginning of his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter in vs. 10 "*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble...*"

And at the end of the letter in chapter 3:17 he concludes by stating "*since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.*"

In these verse brothers and sisters we are told that we have a responsibility to discern. We are to make every effort... to confirm our calling and election, we are to be on our guard.

And the Apostle Peter wrote this 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the early church, and to us, in order to instruct us how to do this – because part of his calling and responsibility as a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, which is the title he begins his letter with... (1:1) was to help new believers determine what was true about Jesus and what was simply a "*cleverly devised story*" – or fake good news.

Peter could do this of course, because as it says in 1:16 he and the other apostles were "*eyewitnesses of [Jesus] majesty*" To use the cash analogy Peter had worked at the Royal Canadian Mint and personally witnessed how genuine money is printed and knows the real deal.

But Peter isn't going to be around all the time to help these new believers sort out the fakes, and even though he knows they have the real deal – because he's given it to them, he

wants to ensure that when he is gone, they will continue to have tools to help them discern what is genuine and what is fake good news.

So, Peter's purpose for writing this letter is found in vs 1:15 and 3:1-2.

He writes *"I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things."* What better way to do that than to write them down – and now we too, two-thousand years later also have the benefit of them.

And Peter also explains that his letters, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, are to meant *"stimulate [them] to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles."*

Peter knows what his task as an Apostle includes and wants to ensure that believers know how to discern according to what he has passed on to them as an eyewitness to the original.

So, brothers and sisters, over the next three weeks we going to dig into the three chapters that make up Peter's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter.

We are going to learn and be blessed... so we can continue to bless others - by what an Apostle, who was an eyewitness to Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, has to say about the consequences of not discerning fake good news.

And we will learn about the clues and characteristics of fake truth and how to recognize the credentials that make for a True Teachers and genuine truth, so that we will always be able to remember these and we will be inspired to wholesome thinking and thus equipped to take up our responsibility and discern and call out fake good-news.

Now... why are we starting with 2 Peter then? Why not start with his first letter? Well brothers and sisters Peter's first

letter was written to the early church to help them deal with lies that were coming at them from outside the church.

The early church and new believers were particularly vulnerable to the lies of the false religions which they had just turned away from to embrace the truth of Jesus Christ. They lived in a society which said “Caesar is Lord not Jesus... Zeus is the most powerful god not Jesus” These are outright contradictions and lies compared with scriptural truth.

To use the money analogy again it would be like someone trying to pay with foreign currency and expecting you to accept it.

Peter’s second letter was written to help the early church and believer deal with the threat they faced from within – counterfeit truth, fake good news, and brothers and sisters that’s our situation today.

The greatest threat to the Church and Christians in the West is from within.

Christians are not turning away from Jesus in droves to embrace Muhammed and worship Allah and become Muslims, they are not becoming Hindus or Buddhists en-mass, instead Christians are being led astray by counterfeit truths and fake good news, and they don’t even realize it until we start seeing the consequences of this play out in front of us.

Churches with historically strong biblical roots turning away from sound doctrine – not just on marriage and human sexuality but about miracles, God’s punishment for sin, the need for Christ’s death in order to forgive our sin, the existence of Hell, and the virgin birth.

And there has been a recent swell of popular christian figures – mostly musicians and artists – having de-conversion experiences and “coming out” about how they no longer believe in traditional Christianity, which has led to the whole “well I’m a Christian but I’m not....” approach.

And this is all wrapped up and packaged as something that is supposedly good and freeing – but it is fake good-news.

If we were to explain how this has come about in the western Church using the counterfeit money analogy there are two ways to describe it.

The first is to go big or go home where the focus on the significant doctrines and teachings of the faith where you can make slight changes to them or omissions that don't appear significant but in fact are making radical changes to them.

Teachings like *"It's all about a relationship and not rules"* or the current emphasis that *"It's all about Love, and Loving others"* are good examples of this. The forgeries that come out of these counterfeit truths are very good and hard to spot – they look and sound and feel like genuine Christian teaching but they are in fact fake-good news.

The second way is to focus on a whole lot of small things that people think are insignificant and pay very little attention to. There's more room here for teachings and ideas to be overtly un-biblical but since no one pays any attention to them they

slip past and become part of what people believe to be the truth.

Little sayings like *"you gotta do what's right for you"* and *"as long as you're happy"* or *"listen to what your heart is telling you..."* are good examples of this approach. We all say things like this and think nothing of it – but we don't realize how all these little things add up and start to influence what we believe to be truth.

And the enemy has been successful in both of these strategies because he has found help on the inside. There are preachers and teachers and church leaders who are helping to pass on these fake truths to the Church, covering up the forgery by saying its how the church must adapt to the times, or that its an improvement that leads to more freedom for us.

And thus individual believers believe the fake good news that *"its all about a relationship and not rules"* or *"its all about love"* and so there is no need to exercise the responsibility we

have to discern what it truth – because that’s not what it’s all about anymore.

But the true truth is that we have a calling to discern and it is a preacher’s responsibility to let believers know this and equip them for it, and its not just Peter who is telling us this.

The Apostle Paul instructs Pastor Timothy *“stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer”* (1 Tim 1:3) And he also warns Timothy *“Watch your life and doctrine closely.”* (1 Tim 4:16)

And the Apostle John writes to believers about this as well stating in 1 John 2:26 *“I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.”* And then in 4:1 *“do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

And Jude – an early church leader - also got his short letter included in scripture and he wrote it because he *“felt*

*compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.”* (Jude 1:3-4)

So there is a lot of emphasis in the New Testament writings from the Apostles and other leaders that we must discern and call out fake-good news and prevent it from getting into the church – and stop it from being passed on to others.

Now, next week we’ll take a closer look at the consequences of letting counterfeit truth into our lives and churches, but as we wrap up this morning, I want to inspire you to embrace our calling to discern - by pointing out its rewards, how we’re blessed by it...

So brothers and sisters when we take the time examine and inspect the teachings and ideas and statements that are coming our way – when we are discerning – Peter tells us that we are *“confirming our calling and election...”* (1:10)

And the reward in this comes from how we experience the evidence of God's choosing to save us and sanctify us. Being able to identify what does not line up with Christian teaching confirms the Holy Spirit is working in us, and we belong to Jesus Christ, and our eyes are being opened to the truth – its such a rewarding experience.

For example; I was listening to the radio yesterday and "Imagine" – by John Lennon came on. I ended up listening to it and afterwards I thought what a horribly un-Christian song, but it was a rewarding experience to be able to indent fake-good news knowing that this is proof of the Holy Spirit's work.

So you can see then how this leads into further rewards where we do not "*stumble*" because there is no disconnect between believe contrary truths, or to be more specific – its how we believe what bible says because we know we should but we want to keep believing the things society says because that's kinda what we really want.

It's so much more rewarding brothers and sisters when what we know we should believe - lines up with what we want to believe – we're internally at peace that way.

And then Peter concludes stating that we "*will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" (1:11)

And doesn't this remind us of Jesus' words in Matt 25:21 where He says "*Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.*"

Think of how rewarding it will be to have the Lord Jesus Himself commend you for being discerning – not simply because you avoided fake good news – but because in doing so you we able to stick with the truth and grow deeper into His Kingdom and grow deeper with Him as King!

So Brothers and sisters - be on your guard, be discerning, watch for counterfeit truth, there is great reward in doing so. And that is NOT – fake good news. Amen.