

Trick or Treat, Truthfully

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walks about, seeking whom he may devour.”

1 Peter 5:8

On Halloween, many of us church folk don't exactly relish the traditional ghoulish festivities. Some shun or just ignore them, while others opt to turn the creepy lemon into lemonade by participating in a concurrent church-sponsored activity. We may not feel comfortable celebrating a day that intentionally raises the hair, whose earmarks include haunted houses and jack-o-lanterns. Neither might we share the enthusiasm of those who disguise themselves as sinister creatures replete with fake blood, scars and wounds decorating latex countenances.

Of course the world thinks this is all fine and clever fun, and even Christians hold differing opinions about what appropriate participation or separation should be. Some claim that the day pays homage to evil, and maybe rightly so. Nonetheless, evil's greatest threat lies in something much more dangerous than an unholy day like Halloween. The enemy employs a much more subtle tactic as the ultimate master of disguise. If he appeared in a red suit with horns and a pitchfork, he'd be scary and unappealing. But the Bible says that he appears as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). In fact his name, Lucifer, literally means “light-bearer,” because he's a beautiful angel, albeit a fallen one. From our viewpoint, it would be so much easier to identify—and run from—our enemy if he were a horrific, ugly creature.

But the devil's beautiful countenance isn't generally revealed to humans in the visible, physical realm. Nonetheless, he aims to deceive man by cloaking evil with beauty in another realm—the spiritual realm of thoughts and ideas. He disguises false doctrine to make it seem so appealing. For example, sweet-sounding words such as “All religions lead to God,” or “Man is basically good,” are beautiful-sounding, empty ideas embraced by the blind masses who can't see the evil cloaked within.

Moreover the devil's tactics include not only disguising evil as good, but also disguising good as evil. Our Gospel is foolishness to the world (1 Corinthians 1:18) and thus common is the notion that God is unfair and the truth of our Gospel narrow-minded because Christ is the only way to Heaven. Never mind the widespread inconsistency that any viewpoint is liberally tolerated—except Christianity's. It just spoils everybody's fun. It's so much more comfortable to envision God as a mild-mannered, accepting old gentleman, or an impersonal force without interest or interaction with man's earthly matters. Then sin and eternal judgment don't have to be dealt with but are conveniently swept under the carpet.

Such false ideas pollute the world like smog but not by accident; they are strategic, demonic devices employed to hide the truth. As a result spiritual blindness abounds. Nonetheless, God has given us the lenses of Scripture to discern both good and evil. But this understanding doesn't just come to us by accident or osmosis. God chooses those to whom He reveals His Plan and His Son Jesus Christ; that is, those truly seeking to know Him (Romans 2:7). Once eternally forgiven, we're given the spiritual resources to grow and be in the world but not of the world. Intimately knowing God through His Word dislodges the scales from our eyes and we become more skilled at recognizing the evil hiding in sheep's clothing. For the devil constantly seeks to capture the hearts and minds of the unenlightened multitudes in order to keep them slaves to sin.

But God's people have overcome the world. Increasing our discernment develops the ability to separate the spiritual wheat from chaff, and that's exactly what Satan doesn't want. Because God's Truth is stronger than evil, it empowers us to stand firm by faith. And each time we don't fall prey to some deception is another battle lost by the enemy.

So Halloween is much like any other day of the year when Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). The important thing for us to remember is to wear the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:13) every day—including Halloween—to keep our heart and mind impervious to a beautiful, evil creature with ravaging fangs.

By Mary Nixon