

10.26.22 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “Testing the Spirits”

Scripture Reading: [1 John 4:1-6](#)

Reflection: Rev. George Vink

When you’re reading this Wednesday morning, I’ll have just entered my 79th year. And, looking back as folks usually do on birthdays, it seems to me that there’s never been a time where Peterson’s translation, “My dear friends, don’t believe everything you hear.” were more applicable. “Test the spirits” was needed as a young church faced the challenge of Gnosticism. But it’s needed today as aging, seemingly weary church members face the challenge of lying and distortions being acceptable means of using media to accomplish self-serving pursuits.

Cornelius Plantinga & Sue Rozeboom in their book addressing worship, [Discerning the Spirits](#), wrote: “The trouble with loving things of the Spirit, as R. C. Roberts wrote is that, ‘the Holy Spirit isn’t the only spirit around.’ The Holy Spirit is in competition with a lot of other spirits, and some of them look as if they come from God too.” [Jeremiah 29:8](#) records God’s warning, “Chaverim (Dear friends), do not believe every *ruach*. But test the *ruchot*, if they be of Hashem (God).” It’s noteworthy that the words “*ruach*” and the plural “*ruchot*” in the *Orthodox Jewish Bible* are Hebrew words also used to describe a wind or blowing of air. Makes the use of “windbags” more applicable during our election season, certainly a “false-spirits” time.

Plantinga and Rozeboom advocate a phrase now rather familiar and appreciated by us at Covenant: “...discernment needed!” False prophets abounded in John’s time and to me now in my 79th year, they seem to have multiplied since, preying on gullible, wanting-to-believe-it folks. All too often we see folks rally around, blindly following prophets proclaiming “truths” that they delight to hear, and all too often with a selfish, “It’s all about what I want to hear” message. Bible truths are distorted to proclaim a prosperity gospel or a political agenda. The gullible follow only to learn their leader has clay feet if not groping hands. False prophets galore! God’s warning to Jeremiah echoed by John still applies.

When Jesus poured out his Spirit upon his followers upon his ascension, he had no personal or political agenda. He had his Father’s mission in mind—The Kingdom. Today, as Jesus’ followers, we need to be discerning as to what spirits are and how they motivate us. Doing so, we ask, “Who and what are influencing my commitment or decisions?” There are simply too many spirits around who seek only their selfish ambition, their delusional deceptions. We’re living in a time and society that appears determined to distort what it means to be a Christian.

Therefore, it’s our responsibility as discerning disciples to distinguish between those who serve Jesus and those who serve themselves, doing so prayerfully, aware of our own temptations. We can and must be “Testing the Spirits!” Doing so while asking God’s Spirit for guidance.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, help me to see what you see, help me to do what you want me to do, and help me to know when it’s

a false, selfish spirit motivating me as well as those with whom I'm journeying my faith life. Thank You for the scriptures, Your Word. Amen.

Action Item for Day/Week:

Take a deliberate hour of TV time and list what "spirits" you see portrayed or appealing to your spirit of "it's about me!" With paper and pencil/pen keep track. It'll surprise you as you seek to discern wisely what is being communicated by way of media. It's a way of "Testing..."

Songs for today:

[Spirit of the Living God](#)

[Dwell in Me, O Blessed Spirit](#)