

ON MAY 19, 2018, VISITING SPEAKERS ARE TO MAKE SIMULTANEOUS SERMONS FOR **REACH BC SABBATH**. THERE MAY BE ADVANTAGES TO ALIGNING OUR MESSAGES AROUND “MISSION” ON THAT DAY. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUGGESTED SERMON. FEEL FREE TO USE, REVISE, EXPAND ON, ETC.

TITLE: Hope and Wholeness—Fake News or Good News?

TIME: About 30 minutes

Have you heard the latest news? I got this from a newsfeed recently.

SILVER SPRING, Md. — A massive lobbying effort launched by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to put Ellen G. White on new \$10 bills has paid off. US Treasury Secretary Jack Lew announced that he had chosen White for the special honor.

“Ellen White is the most translated non-fiction female author in the history of literature,” said Lew. “. . . I felt this accomplishment was worthy of some recognition.”

Now saints what do you think of THAT! Ellen White on the American \$10 bill!! Isn't that great! Some of you look a little skeptical.

This remarkable news release came from an online news service known as “Barely Adventist.” Their mission is to poke fun at the Church. Their Bible text is Proverbs 17:22. “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

Fake news is nothing new and is no laughing matter. In 1475, it was rumored that Jews in the town of Trent in Northern Italy had murdered a young Christian child named Simonio. Every Jew in the town was rounded up and more than a dozen of them were burned at the stake for something that was later found to be fake news.

But the most tragic episode of fake news happened thousands or even millions of years ago. We don't know the exact date.

We do know that God created a brilliant group of beings known as angels. He created them intelligent and sinless. And then he showered them with love and the most perfect environment of Heaven. Can you imagine what heaven was like? Only one pulse of sentiment felt throughout the entire place, an outpouring of love to the Creator God and to each other.

But God also took a risk in making these beings intelligent. He didn't have to. He could have made them robots, wind-up toys who were programmed to love him. How would YOU like a wind-up husband or wife, child or friend? Push a button and they say “I love you” 25 times. That's not what God is like. Rather he gave the angels freedom to choose to

love him, but with that choice came a risk. The risk was that one day someone would choose NOT to love him.

And that's exactly what happened. You know the story how God appointed Lucifer head of all the angels--the "the covering cherub" who stood in the immediate presence of God. It's said he could sing soprano, alto, tenor, and bass at the same time. Can you imagine someone announcing special music: "We will now have a choir selection by Lucifer!" He started getting more and more compliments and then something new and strange happened in the mind of beautiful Lucifer.

He became intoxicated with himself. One day he thought he was due another promotion—to be a part of the godhead. His resume is found in your Bible to Isaiah 14:12-14.

I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:
I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will be like the most High.

When individuals get full of themselves, they pull others down in order to bring themselves up. And so Lucifer began a series of tweets to discredit God. He started sowing dissatisfaction throughout the heavenly host. He sent out a barrage of fake news.

He said God was selfish, wanting only the best for Himself. He said God was unfair, not allowing others to share in His glory. He said God was dictatorial, commanding the universe to do things His way.

Like people in the town of Trent, fake news registered in the hearts and minds of those who heard it. Lucifer engaged God in a full-scale revolt. According to Revelation 12:7-9:

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

In Revelation 12: 2 and 3, the Bible states that fully one-third of the angels converted to the side of Satan. Talk about Star Wars. That was the real thing! How do you think the Creator God felt? The very beings that He called into existence to love Him intensely were now lined up against Him as if He were a common criminal.

And as if that weren't enough, Satan and his angels brought fake news to planet earth. Both the innocent but disobedient Eve and the not-so-innocent Adam fell for the lies. After obeying Satan they tried to run away from God.

And that's the way sin is. It makes people want to run away from God. Most people these days barely give God a passing thought. Maybe a quick word to him before meals or "Oh my God" when they get in a jam. How often do WE Christians allow our thoughts stray away from the most loving force in the universe. Do YOU have any idea how much God loves you?

Satan's fake love is like a tiny grain of sand. But love of God is as big as the universe—and the universe is 38 billion light years across—and each light year is 5.88 trillion miles. Let that sink in. ONE light year is 5.88 trillion miles, and the universe according to the latest scientific findings is not one, or two, or five light years but 38 billion! Listen to the words of this song:

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.

Could we with ink the ocean fill
And were the skies of parchment made
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade

To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky

O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.

Have you ever seen a young mother with her baby cuddled securely in her arms? Did you hear her whisper softly into baby's ear? Did you watch her eyes focus intensely on baby's eyes—looking for the slightest signal that baby responds to her love? She gives baby a tickle and baby's laughs and coos in response.

That's a little like God who loves us infinitely more than that mother. When God loves us, like the mother, He also looks for our response. How many times we spurn Him—too busy checking the stock market, surfing the internet, or even working for the Lord.

I expect God feels a lot like a jilted lover. There goes Christ crying over the distant profile of the city, Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

But God loves us in spite of ourselves. Now isn't that good news!

Today before I sit down, I want to mention two specific ways Satan has orchestrated a system of fake news to counteract God's good news for the human family. And he has been extremely effective.

First, Satan tries to get humans to pin their hope on anything but God.

He says put your hope in money. How many of you would like to win the lottery? (Don't raise your hand. You KNOW we shouldn't gamble!) Think of all you could do with the money. But scientific studies indicate that lottery winners after the initial blush has worn off are no happier than the rest of us. No friends, there's no hope in money.

Satan says put your hopes in beauty. But beauty fades. If you don't believe it look around at your next class reunion. Checkout the movie stars when they get to be 85 or 90. There's no hope in beauty.

He says put your hopes in friends. But even your best friends can't take the place of God. And when your money is gone and you lose your health, it's amazing how friends seem to thin out. We can't pin our hope on friends—even good friends.

And if Satan doesn't get us off-track in these hope substitutes, he has one more trick. Satan wants us to give up Hope, itself.

A kindergarten teacher held up a globe to her children. They had been studying shapes such as triangles and circles, and so she asked the children, "What shape is the world?" Little Robert piped up and said, "Teacher, my daddy says this world is in terrible shape!"

Satan says the world is in a mess. And for once, Satan is telling the truth. There's hunger, disease, terrorism, political theater, and the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation. There's a group of nuclear scientists who predict each year how close the world is approaching the end of civilization. They express their conclusions by the number of

minutes until midnight on a doomsday clock. 25 years ago it was 14 minutes till midnight. Just this year 2018, the scientists moved the clock up to two minutes till midnight-tying a record! The world IS in terrible shape.

Satan says the situation is hopeless but that's fake news. Seventh-day Adventists know better. The prophet Daniel outlined the future of the world in a dream about an image that symbolized four emerging world powers. And we're now living in the toes of that image. And although troublous times are ahead, we have concrete hope that the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. He's got the whole world in His hands!

And that's why we Adventists ought to be the happiest, most joyful people in the world, because "We have this hope that burns within our hearts, hope in the coming of the Lord! What about it Church? Isn't THAT good news!"

And the second specific way Satan uses fake news is not about the future—it's about the present. Since the future looks so bad, he says, you might as well eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.

Speaking of eating, what about this food advertisement? "Yea hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? . . . Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat, thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:5. Fake news.

Here's another advertisement by the American Meat institute.

"Nourishing meat! A complete protein food. Why do we say complete?? Because the protein of meat contains all the amino acids essential to growth and well-being. That's why meat is being served so much oftener—two to three times a day—and to very young children, too. Yes, you're right in liking meat and isn't that eating good." Fake news.

And vegetarian diets may be just as unhealthy. A recent study reported in the *American Journal of Cardiology* involved over 200,00 people over two decades. They found vegetarian diets where sweetened drinks, potatoes, and refined foods were prominent were just as unhealthy as meat diets in causing cardio-vascular disease.

And it's not just about eating. A Northwestern university study just out found that night owls who go to bed late and get up late have a 10% chance of dying earlier.

Even sitting may be dangerous to your health. No matter how much you exercise, **sitting** for excessively long periods of time is a risk factor for early death, a study

published a few months ago in *Annals of Internal Medicine* found. There's a direct relationship between time spent **sitting** and **your** risk of early mortality of any cause.

But God's way is the best way! He always gets the last word. Just as there's good news in hope, there's also great news in wholeness. Why buy Satan's fake news when we can be the happiest, healthiest people in the world?

A famous research scientist gave a lecture at a national convention of researchers. He said, "I am about to give you the results of the world's very first controlled experiment. And I found an account of that experiment in my hotel room last night. It's in the Bible and it's found in Daniel chapter 1." The man went on to tell about the Hebrew youths who appealed for a healthy lifestyle and the incredible results that followed. In all manners of wisdom they were ten times better than the control group.

When I think of the good news about wholeness, I think of Professor Ernest E. Rogers, a retired Greek professor at one of our Adventist colleges. Dr. Roger's devoted wife had passed away and for many years he lived alone. Then one day at Tuesday morning prayer meeting, his 93-year-old eyes fell upon 90-year old Annell in her beautiful blue dress. He said, "the scales fell off my eyes, and I said to myself, "look at here! What am I missing?"

Long story short, they fell in love and were married, he was 94 and she was 91 at a marvelous wedding ceremony attended by hundreds of well-wishers. As of this writing, seven years later, they're still married, living in their lovely little home, and happy as ever!

Psalm 16:11 Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

But the very best example of Hope and Wholeness is found not in Daniel, or Samuel, or Esther, or even the apostle Paul. The best example of hope and wholeness is found in Jesus.

John 10:10. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. "

Satan made a mess of the universe with his lies, deceit, and fake news. When you think of it, most of the world today has a distorted view of God.

- 1.5 billion Muslims say they believe in God but not the kind of God that gives hope and wholeness as exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.
- Almost a billion people are Hindus. They feel God is in many diverse forms and certainly not the personal God of hope and wholeness that we serve.

- Add to that perhaps 250 million Buddhists and an equal number of animists whose God consist of dead ancestors or of powers in the spirit world.
- Then there are 750 million people who have no religion at all. They know nothing about a God of hope and wholeness. That includes 150 million atheists who have given up on any idea of God.
- And one reason why atheists and others have such a distorted picture of God is because of the two billion persons who call themselves Christians. Talk about distortions! So many who call themselves Christians haven't the faintest idea what God is like. They fight with each other and abuse their bodies the same way the rest of the world does. And far too many so-called Christians are without joy.
- And that includes some Seventh-day Adventists by the way. As one young man said," to me God is Someone in the sky looking down to see if I'm having any fun so He could ZAP me."
- The world and the church is drowning in fake news about God.

Even Christ's disciples had a distorted picture of Him.

John 14:8. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. An in a look that must have been pained, in verse nine, "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

The world is starving for a true picture of God. And we Seventh-day Adventists have a more complete picture than anyone else in the entire world, based upon God's holy word as well as insights from Ellen White's writings.

When it comes to HOPE, Adventists have a distinctive message illustrated by Sanctuary truths, modeled in the life of Christ, communicated by the prophets and expressed in the Three Angel's Messages of Revelation 14:6-12. This special, Christ-centered message points to His second coming—a concept embroidered in our very name, Seventh-day Adventists!

When it comes to WHOLENESS, Our distinctive, Christ-centered message not only points to the future—it adds "more abundant life" to the present! Hundreds of scientific studies confirm the benefits of our Adventist message of health of body, mind, and spirit. Sabbath rest nourishes the soul. Our ideas of education and community involve developing the whole person in this life and throughout eternity.

But, unfortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the world's best kept secrets. In the U.S., most people know absolutely nothing about us and a third of America's young people have never even heard our name. That picture is even more bleak in other parts of our Division territory.

So let's get very personal. First, what can THIS church, the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church, do to offer hope and wholeness to the community in a way *that would be inviting to them*? Are you searching for new ways of attracting visitors without compromising our beliefs? You can't win people with services that only appeal to people my age and older. You can't win people hiding out in our churches on Sabbath morning and sleeping in on Sabbath afternoons. How can we rub shoulders with the world—just as Jesus did—and show them the path to life and health? And if they don't come to us, how can we go to them?

I challenge this church to devise a strategy where EVERY department and every church member can work together as one and make Hope and Wholeness household words in our church and in our communities. Is that all right? Let's be known as the "Hope and Wholeness people!" How many of you would agree to be a part of such a movement if it were well organized and spirit-led?

The next challenge is to each one of us personally—myself included. Are we willing individually to live lives of hope and wholeness as exemplified in the marvelous life of Christ. Maybe our lives to this point have not always painted the most accurate picture of what God is like. Could it be that through busyness or negligence, we've gotten careless along the way? When people look at us—including our own families—do they see Jesus? Jesus is the very picture of God.

Turn in your hymnals to page 492, Like Jesus, and ponder the words of this song.

Teach me father what to say;
Teach me father how to pray;
Teach me all along the way how to be like Jesus.

[And verse four]:

Teach me how we may be one;
Like the Father and the Son;
And when all is overcome, I will be like Jesus.

CHORUS: I would be like Jesus, I would be like Jesus
Help me Lord to daily grow, more and more like Jesus.

Is that your prayer today? [You may close with that song, an appeal, and prayer].

[Note: an alternative is to feature the song written by Daniel Stoyanovic entitled, "Christ is our Hope and Wholeness." The author has sheet music that may be obtained upon request]