**On Hallowe’en – By Thailer Jimerson**

This article might be a little tardy since Hallowe’en is technically past, but it was really important for me to use the article space last week to supplement the sermon on how we can better engage our children with the Bible by mapping out some techniques under the teaching philosophy called Narration. Still, I found myself wanting to share a word or two on Hallowe’en.

 This year’s Hallowe’en marked a first for us since it unfortunately fell on a Wednesday when we typically gather around the word of God for our weekly bible classes. So, with zero qualms, my family was present to study instead of trick-or-treating. But typically, we’d be out on the pavement, rapping on front doors for chocolatey treats and admiring the ghoulish shroud cast over otherwise normal-looking neighborhoods.

**Where does Hallowe’en Come From?**

The word Hallowe’en is a shortened word, and probably a Scottish pronunciation, originating from “All Hallows Eve”. It was the night before All Hallows Day, a holy day in the church calendar when the devout would pay mind to departed saints and martyrs. Most scholars debate the exact origins of the holiday, but many would agree that sometime around the 9th century the Catholic church moved this day of celebration to the beginning of November. This meant it would run parallel to an old Celtic celebration by the name of Samhain (sah-win) which marked the beginning of Winter. It was said that on this night, which, for the pagans, marked the last day of their year, the thin veil between the living and the dead was removed. In order to protect themselves, children throughout Europe (and Scotland, in particular) would go about “guising” (wearing a mask). They’d show up at door steps offering to recite a poem or tell a joke and expected to be rewarded afterward. Somehow, like most holidays, a confluence of these folk tales and traditions were passed along through Scottish immigrants to America and resulted in the modern practices we have today. Because America popularized it, the rest of the world caught on.

**Conscience**

This holiday means quite a lot of things for various groups, but for Christians its always been a day of ambivalence. Some consider it a night of fun, candy and silly costumes bottling the essence of the spirit; still, for others, they eschew it altogether for its pagan roots and demonic practices. Some are downright confused.

I read a story recently from a brother: “We have a member here who is very much offended by the celebration of Christmas and Easter due to its ‘pagan roots.’ She has wept in my office over how we just don’t understand how evil, and satanic Christmas trees and Easter Bunnies are, and she believes we are grieving the Holy Spirit in participating. Today she walked into the church office elaborately dressed as a witch. She just loves dressing up in spooky outfits at Halloween. How do I even begin to enter this discussion?”

 We might get a chuckle out of that predicament but it’s a good representation over the murky opinions of most over the holidays. What should we do? Do we abstain? Do we partake? Ultimately, like most issues over which the Bible is silent, we must consider this a debatable opinion, a matter that can be safely decided by a conscience informed of the word and with an aim to glorify the Lord. Romans 14 makes it very clear that some people observe a day as unto the Lord and some abstain as unto the Lord – and neither are wrong. Whatever faith we have, we must keep it. Our biblically-informed conscience must be our guide in all gray issues, including various holidays.
 However, I think we may all agree that what is beyond the pale is any celebration or fellowship with anything overtly demonic or condemned in scripture (see Dt.18.10-12).

**Who’s Really Afraid?**

I believe in spirits and the demonic, just as the Bible says (Eph.6.12). But one reason I’ve not succumbed to fear during this season is that, ultimately, I know Him who truly haunts the mind of evil. Christians aren’t the ones who cower in fear (Heb.2.15). When Jesus comes upon the scene, the demons withdraw from him (Mk.1.24, 34; 3.11-12; 5.1-13; 7.25; 9.17-20). James, the brother of Jesus, tells us that the demons believe and tremble at his name (Jas.2.19). Jesus appeared to finally destroy the works of the devil (1Jn.3.18), so we can take heart for he has overcome the world (Jn.16.33). And if we are in Christ, when we resist the devil, he will flee from us, too (Jas.4.7) for he knows our Master.

 Just as David Mathis has wonderfully written: “When Jesus haunts our Halloween, we remember that the forces of evil, which we can be so prone to fear, are actually terrified of Jesus. Every day is a spook for the devil and his demons, and Jesus does the haunting. The decisive blow has been dealt, and soon we will land the final punch.”

“And though this world with devils filled

Should threaten to undo us,

We will not fear for God hath willed

His truth to triumph through us.

The prince of darkness grim,

We tremble not for him.

His rage we can endure,

For lo his doom is sure.

One little word shall fell him.”

* A Mighty Fortress is Our God, Martin Luther