

## **Do you look helpful but are actually harmful?**

Jude 1:1-13

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### TRANSCRIPT:

Heavenly Father, we ask that You would send the Holy Spirit to us now so that we do not walk into wickedness but instead draw closer to Your law and closer to You through Your Son, Jesus Christ. And we pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, this morning we continue studying the book of Jude together. It's good for us to remember who Jude was. We believe that Jude, as it says there in verse one, was a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, and that meaning by "we believe that brother of James" means that he was actually the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a son of Joseph and Mary. And Jude's readers were clearly Christians. We see that in Jude 1:1, "to those who've been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ." And we also understand that Jude wrote to these people, to these believers, in order to warn them against sexual immorality and rebellion. And we see that in Jude 1:4, "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you." There are certain men, certain leaders, who've come into the church, certain people, and these people are godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord.

And so we understand that these people were encouraging people into immorality as a result of, they would in some way be teaching that because we're saved by grace, we can do what we like, and also, of course, rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. And we've seen that Jude has been showing how dangerous these men are by using Old Testament examples of people who've come before, who were in a very similar vein. And so we've looked at those different examples, and even the more recent ones that we looked at were in Jude 1:11, "People who have taken the way of Cain, they've rushed for profit into Balaam's error, and they've been destroyed in Korah's rebellion." So Cain, Balaam, and Korah have been held up, as we've been looking at them in recent weeks, as people who are like these people who've come into the church and are encouraging immorality and denying the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Jude continues to give examples as to how we can watch out for these people and how dangerous they are, but now he's not giving examples from the Old Testament. He's going to give examples from everyday life and from nature. And we see those in Jude 1:12, where there are six illustrations that he gives from nature. And so what is the first illustration that we see? Well, I encourage you to open your Bibles there to Jude 1:12. And he says, "these men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm." The first illustration is the idea of a feast that you would go to, and that these people are blemishes at the love feasts. What are the blemishes? What does it mean to be a blemish, to be a spot? Well, it's probably not the best translation there. It can also be translated as hidden reefs, kind of the reef that you would find in water. And that's what the ESV and the New American Standard have. And so what are these people like as you come and you feast with them? They're like rocks that appear to give stability in the water. So you look at them and you think that they're stable, but then as you come up against them, you actually get hurt. And you come away with bleeding stains, which is what happens when you go across a reef. It actually starts to hurt you and cut you.

And so the idea is that these people come into the church, they come to our meals, they come to church lunches, they come into our homes, and they look like solid rocks. They look like they're going to be helpful for us. But when we rub up against such people, we come away wounded. Why? Because they're actually divisive. They actually do not unite us with others and with other Christians and the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead, they cause harm. And this is what we're going to see with all these illustrations, that each of these illustrations that Jude gives is of something that looks like it's going to be helpful, but as we actually come up against it, it's going to be harmful or may actually provide nothing. We're going to see this again and again with these six illustrations. And that's what these people are like in the church, that they look like they're going to be helpful, but it turns out they either don't give us anything at all or they turn out to harm us.

And so what is the second illustration that is given after these people who are like hidden reefs? Well, it's there in Jude 1:12 as well. It says, "shepherds who feed only themselves." What are shepherds good for? Well, for feeding the sheep, for looking after the sheep. But what are these shepherds doing whom Jude is warning about? They're only interested in feeding themselves. We read there in Jude 1:12. And so they're like Balaam that we looked at a few weeks ago, this prophet who was more interested in what he could get as a result of his ministry rather than what he could give. And so how do we see such people today in our churches? Well, they're leaders who are clearly in it for what they can get from the people of God rather than what they can give to the people of God.

What is the third illustration? Well, we see that it's clouds. Jude 1:12, it says, "they are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind." What are clouds for the farmer? As he sees clouds coming, they're a sign of hope. They're a sign of help for his crops. They're a sign that water is going to come. But what are the clouds that Jude is warning about? Well, these are clouds that you see. They look like they're gonna be helpful, but then what happens? They're blown away and they never give you rain at all. And we see these clouds all the time, don't we? We think it's gonna rain. Well, it turns out it's not rain at all that's come. They're blown away, the clouds go away, and we don't feel a drop of rain. And how could these such people be amongst us? Well, they in the church, well, they look like they're gonna bring showers of blessing. You see these people, they look helpful. They're gonna be a blessing, but they quickly disappear. They don't remain at all. They're blown away like clouds. They look like they're gonna bring something good, but in fact, bring nothing at all.

What's the fourth illustration? Well, it's autumn trees. And we see that in Jude 1:12 as well. We see that they're autumn trees without fruit, uprooted, twice dead. What are fruit trees meant to do? They're meant to give us fruit. They're meant to give us fruit that we can eat and enjoy and provide life to us. And we particularly look for fruit from them when it's the season for fruit. And that's what these trees are. They're meant to be autumn trees. They're trees that you go up to during autumn when it's the season for receiving fruit. But what do these trees do? They do not produce fruit. Even in the season they're supposed to be producing fruit, they clearly do not produce fruit. And so instead, they are twice dead and uprooted. It says there in Jude 1:12. And so how do we see such people today? Well, what is fruit in the Bible? What do we often associate with fruit in the Bible? Well, in the New Testament, of course, we think of the fruit of the Spirit, of love and joy and peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are the fruit of the Spirit. And there are people who come into the church and they look like they're gonna produce the fruit of the Spirit. Particularly when it's the season for producing fruit, they're under the preaching of the word. They're there amongst the people of God. It's a season where prayer is being offered for them. And yet they do not produce the fruit of the Spirit. Particularly the fruit of love is just lacking in these people.

And what is the fifth illustration? Well, we move into Jude 1:13. Verse 13 says, "there are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame." What's the benefit of waves at the beach? What do waves do? Well, waves bring cleansing. How do they do that? By bringing different water along so the water doesn't stagnate. And waves bring oxygen into the water so that the fish can live in the water. They bring a cleansing. And they bring, of course,

if you're at the sea, the waves that are there, that are quite violent compared to lakes, ones that have salt in them. And so we understand that as we see waves coming, it means a sign of cleansing. If you go out into the waves of the ocean, it's different from going out into a little pond that is stagnant. But what are these waves like? Well, we read in Jude 1:13 they're wild waves. They're violent waves. And what do violent waves do to a beach? They bring a polluted mess. They bring driftwood. They bring seaweed. They bring any sort of dirt and soil that has been out in them. And they bring it up and dump it on the beach. So it ends up with a beach that's had wild waves come against it is a polluted mess. And how do we see such people today in the church? What is Jude warning about? People who look like they're gonna bring a cleansing and a renewal to a church, but instead they actually bring pollution. You think they're gonna bring something good and helpful, but instead they bring pollution. They leave sin in their wake.

And then the final one, the sixth one, what is the final illustration that Jude gives from nature about these people that we need to worry about, we need to be warned of? Well, they're wandering stars. Jude 1:13, "wandering stars for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever." What is the benefit of stars? The benefit of stars is that they give light to us in the darkness. It'd be terrible if we didn't have stars at night. Well, of course, we have electrical light here in the city, but if you're out in the desert in the country, stars are a great benefit. And of course, they also guide. They give light, but they also guide us. They have a constancy about them by which you can follow them. But what are these stars? These stars are wandering stars. These are like comets or shooting stars. And so therefore, they do not give a consistent light, do they? A shooting star gives light for a moment and then is gone. And it's not a constant light that you can guide yourself by. And so what are such people in the church that Jude is warning about? Well, these people look like they're gonna guide. They look like they're gonna give light. They look like they're gonna draw us closer to the Lord. They're gonna enlighten us about God. But instead, what do they do? They lead us astray. They lead us, in fact, away from God. And the light that they give peters out all too quickly.

So what do all these illustrations show? They show that there are people who look good in a church but actually turn out to be bad. There are people who look good. They look like they're gonna be helpful, but they are actually harmful. There are people in churches, including leaders, pastors, deacons, members, who will be amongst the church and look like they will help. They look like they'll be as firm as a rock that you can latch onto, you can stand on. They look like people who will feed you. They'll give you rain. They'll yield fruit. They'll give cleansing. They will enlighten and guide us. But what is the reality? They bring nothing at all or actually harm us,

quickly undoing any help that they may have given. How? They cut us up like a reef. They starve us. They dehydrate us. They cause fruitlessness. They pollute us and lead us astray.

So what does Jude want us to do? He wants us to watch out for such people, to watch out for them, know that harmful people are out there, and contend against them. That's what we saw in Jude 1:3, "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." He wants us to contend for what is right. And when we looked at that verse many Sundays ago, the word "contend" there means to wrestle. We've got to wrestle with these people who come in and actually end up harming us rather than helping us.

But do such people exist? Do such people exist? Yes. You see it all through the Old Testament. I mean, we've had Old Testament examples, but even that passage that we had read before, Ezekiel 34, talking about shepherds who only look out for themselves. We see it in the Old Testament. Of course, we see it in the New Testament. Otherwise, Jude wouldn't have written his letter at all. But of course, if you look in the Gospels, who's a classic example of someone who's only interested in himself and was amongst God's people? Judas. He was amongst the twelve. He was there with the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet he was a cloud without rain. He was an unfruitful tree. Even in the season, he was a season, the great season with the Lord Jesus, he was an autumn tree but did not yield fruit.

But do they still exist today? Do we still have such people in our churches today? The answer is yes. Where do we see them? One of the classic examples, of course, is with popular pastors of big, large churches or big, large parachurch ministries. And they look like they're going to be so helpful. They've written books that have been a great blessing to us. They've preached sermons that have been so helpful to us. But what do we see? We see them fall hard, often undoing all the good work that they did by shaking people's faith in the Lord altogether. They looked like they were a star by which we could be guided, but as they fell, turned out they were just a shooting star. It shakes people's faith as to whether Christianity is true at all. If this man who would seem to be such a faithful Christian could then behave this way, is Christianity true? And so he actually does great harm to the people of God.

But of course, smaller churches are not immune from this either, from such pastors, from deacons, from members who come in amongst the church and look like they'll be helpful but turn out to be harmful. And it's not as public as these big names, but it happens again and again. I mean, we see that these people come in secretly. They slip in secretly amongst you. They

look like they're going to be helpful. They look like they're a shepherd of the sheep. They look like they're going to be a faithful person who is going to be helpful to us, but instead actually cause us harm.

But why should we contend against such people? Why should we contend against them at all? Why should we bother? Well, what will happen to those people and to those who follow them? Well, Jude warns us in these verses that are before us. What happens to them? Well, we see it with the clouds. They're blown away, blown away by the wind. They're blown away like a rainless cloud. They're pulled up by the roots like a fruitless tree, twice dead, it says there in Jude 1:12. And what's the third thing that we see happens to such people? Well, it's in reference to the stars. They're stars for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. It is dangerous to be one of these people. It is dangerous to follow one of these people. Why? Because they will end up going into death and blackest darkness, which has been reserved for them forever. They go to hell. That is what Jude is teaching for us here in this book.

But how do we contend with such people? How do we contend? How do we wrestle with such people for the faith? How do we know who is truly helpful? How can we notice someone amongst us that looks like they're helpful but is actually harmful? What's a good key indicator that we can look for about someone amongst us who looks to be helpful but is actually turning out to be unhelpful or not provide anything at all? Well, we should be looking out. What's the key indicator we should be looking for in someone? Whether they keep on pointing us back to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know if someone's going to be helpful for you, do they keep on talking about and pointing you to the Lord Jesus Christ?

How do we know that that's the helpful indicator? Well, we know it even from these verses before us in the book of Jude that we read. What do these people tend to do? Well, we saw it in Jude 1:4. They're godless men who change the grace of God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord. They're not interested in the Lord Jesus Christ. They're far more interested in other things than the Lord Jesus Christ. But why would that be the case? Why is it Jesus that people should be pointing us back to again and again? Why must we follow those who point us to Christ? Because Jesus is the perfect leader. Jesus is the perfect leader. Jesus is the rock and not a reef who we can stand on at our love feast. When we have fellowship with one another, Jesus is the foundation by which we can enjoy fellowship with each other. Jesus is the shepherd who always feeds his sheep with his holy word. Jesus is the cloud who actually delivers rain, who isn't blown away without giving us any blessing. Jesus is the one who sends showers of blessing upon his people. Jesus is the tree who yields the fruit of the spirit to us. He shows

us love and peace and patience and kindness, and then he produces in us the fruit of the spirit as well. Jesus is the wave who brings cleansing from sin rather than pollution. Jesus is the star who always guides and gives light. He is not a wandering star. He is a constant star by which we can be guided and receive light as we walk towards our heavenly home.

But why do we need help at all? Why do we need leaders? Why do we need someone to be a rock for us? Why do we need fruit? Why do we need a star? Because we are all harmful sinners. We are often all of us in this room, we are often reefs that cut other people up by our sin. We are often shepherds who love to sinfully take from others and not give. We are clouds without rain. How often have we gone into someone's life and then been blown away without producing any blessing to them, produced harm in their life? How often are we trees without the fruit of the spirit of love and joy and peace and patience? Even when the season is right, we do not produce the fruit of the spirit in their lives. How often are we waves that look like we're gonna bring some cleansing but instead bring sinful pollution into someone's life? And how often are we wandering stars that do not give light and do not give guidance to people to God?

And so what do we all deserve? We deserve what happens to these people that we read of in the book of Jude. We deserve to be blown away like a rainless cloud. We deserve to be uprooted like a dead tree. We deserve to be cast eternally into blackest darkness. Cast into hell itself. But what's the good news? The good news is Jesus Christ. And what about Jesus Christ is the good news? The good news is that Jesus Christ died for sinners. He died for rainless clouds. He died for unfruitful trees. He died for wandering stars. He died for reefs that cut people up.

How though is Jesus' death helpful for us when we've been so harmful to others? Because at the cross, Jesus was blown away like a cloud without rain. Jesus was blown away. Jesus at the cross was uprooted like a dead tree. At the cross, Jesus was cast into blackest darkness. Why? When He was always a faithful shepherd, a fruitful tree, a constant star? Why? Because He took the punishment that the wandering stars deserve. He took the punishment that the unfruitful trees deserve, so that they would never be blown away, so that they would never be uprooted, so that they would never be cast into blackest darkness. Instead, what happens to those who trust in Jesus Christ, who have Him as their leader? They are forgiven of their sins. They actually help others rather than harm them, and they eventually go into the whitest light, the whitest light of heaven itself.

So we need Jesus Christ. We need Jesus Christ, and we need people to keep pointing us to Jesus Christ because we are harmful people, and we deserve blackest darkness. But if we have Jesus, if we're united with Jesus

by faith, and keep coming to Him, well then we rejoice in Him, and we know that He has forgiven us and given us the whitest light, and we rejoice in His death. We rejoice in His death because we know that He is the source of all benefit to us. That because of Christ's death, He is the rock on which our sins are dashed. Because of Christ's death, He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Because of Christ's death, we experience all showers of blessing, and because of Christ's death, we produce the fruit of the spirit, and by Christ's death, cleansing comes like a wave, a saltwater wave. And because of Christ's death, He is a star that gives guidance and light all the way to heaven itself.

And so we rejoice in Christ. We look to Christ, and what particularly? His death. Because by His death, all the blessings come that God gives to sinners who deserve blackest darkness forever but instead look forward to whitest light. So if you're not a Christian and you're here this morning, what should you do? Confess your sinfulness. Confess your sinfulness. Confess what? That you are a reef, that you are a selfish shepherd, that you're a rainless cloud, that you're a fruitless tree, that you're a polluting wave, that you're a wandering star. Confess that you have cut others up, that you've starved others, that you've dehydrated others, that you've been unfruitful and polluted, and that you've led others astray. Confess that you deserve to be blown away like a rainless cloud. Confess that you deserve to be uprooted. Confess that you deserve to be cast into the blackest darkness forever.

And then what should you do? Confess these things to the Lord, but then cast yourself upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust in Jesus Christ. Believe that Jesus' death is the source of your salvation, that the reason God will accept you into the whitest of light is not because of you, but because of Jesus Christ. That people have pointed you to Jesus, and you have gone to Jesus, and you've trusted in His death as the payment for your sin, the payment for the blackest darkness that you deserve.

And for those of us who have cast ourselves upon Christ, what should we do? Well, we should help others rather than harm them. That's what we're supposed to do. We're meant to do the opposite of what we see in Jude 1:12-13. We're meant to be a rock so that others can be secure when they come to fellowship with us. We're meant to be a shepherd who feeds others the word of God. We're meant to be clouds from whom the Holy Spirit rains blessings down upon others. We're meant to be a tree that produces the fruit of the Spirit. We're meant to be waves that help people repent of their sins and experience a cleansing. We're meant to be those saltwater waves. And we're meant to be stars that guide and give light to others so that they can go to heaven.



You say, how can I do this? I recognize that I don't fit these illustrations that are given to us, the opposite of them, that I am far more like verses 12 and 13. How can we do this? How can we do what we're expected to do as Christians by our God? Well, it's by continually pointing ourselves to Christ's death and continually pointing others to Christ's death. If we continue to point people to Jesus Christ, point ourselves and others to Christ, then we will do these things that are expected of us in helping others. Instead of being things that look good but then bring harm or bring nothing at all, we will be things that bring help to others because we keep pointing to the only one who can help them, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

And so I encourage you, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, help rather than harm by pointing people to Jesus. And what else should you do? You should rejoice and thank God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Rejoice and thank Him, why? Because Jesus has helped us and uses us to help others by His Spirit. It's such a wonderful privilege to be one of His servants who He works in to be a blessing to others, so that we're a shepherd that is helpful, we're a rainfall cloud, we're a star by which people can be guided to Christ, and then follow Him to glory.

And why else should we rejoice and thank God? Well, because of Jesus Christ, we help others, but we also are helped ourselves, and we look forward to the whitest light that has been reserved for us in heaven itself. And what is the whitest light? Well, I think we could safely say it's going to be looking at the face of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That is the whitest light, and we look forward to that. At the moment, we see things dimly in the darkness, but we have the light of Christ for us today to be guided to. But one day, we will see things clearly. We will go into the whitest light of heaven and see the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been the leader of us in this world and will be our leader and king for all eternity.

And so we should rejoice and thank God because we deserved blackest darkness but instead we're going to be in the whitest light and see the face of Jesus. Let's come to our God in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we praise You for Your love, for You sent Your Son to help us by His death. We confess, O God, that we've harmed others. Instead of helping others, we have hurt them. And so we confess, O God, that we deserve blackest darkness. We deserve never to see the face of Jesus Christ, but we thank You for punishing Your Son with the blackest darkness in our place, so that now we can be with Him in the whitest light of heaven. Help us, O God, to keep looking to Jesus and pointing others to Him so they may rejoice with us in the whitest light of glory. And we pray this in Christ's name, amen.