**You Will Bear Witness**

**John 15:26-16:4**

**Exaudi – 5/24/2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In our Gospel lesson we have this. [Jesus said,] *"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”*

Let me put it succinctly, if you have the Holy Spirit – if you are a Christian – you ***will*** bear witness about Christ. What does that mean? It means that you will bear witness about Christ in your conversations and in your life. You will be a living witness to Christ in you, that others may see your life in Christ and give glory to the Father.

This is not an option! You will do it!

But Jesus does not end there, He continues, *"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.”*

You heard it here my friends, and this is not the first time, there will be those who will persecute you. Some will even think that killing you is offering service to God. Isn’t that what Muslims say?

Those faithful to the Scriptures, those who believe in Christ and are witnesses to Christ, know persecution today. That persecution comes in many forms. In our case in 21st Century U.S. of A. it probably does not mean suffering martyrdom as many did in the early church, knowing that choosing to confess Christ meant they would endure some sort of torture unto death.

Persecution may mean being laughed at for our faith. It may mean, if we are faithful, that some will not want to be our friends. It might mean we are called names for what we confess.

What will you endure to bear witness to Christ? Will you endure the hardship of being separated from family and friends for 12 months so that you might be trained further to be a faithful witness? I am proud to know five men from Nigeria who have done so!

Would you witness to the truth that there are false witnesses to Christ, some in your neighborhood maybe, who are claiming to speak in the name of Christ, but a leading people astray – possibly to eternal destruction?

Where are some places that you should bear witness? Do you have unbelieving family members around whom you avoid any mention of your Christian faith? Do you avoid prayer in front of them because it might cause a stir in the family? Is your faith plainly evident to the people you work with? Do you join in with them, the same profanity and misuse of God’s name passing your lips as theirs? Or, do you ask them not to use your Lord’s name in such a manner? If discussions come up which deny the truths of Christianity, are you a bold witness in defense of the truth? Or are these times when your faith dies, withering in silence, and you are a witness to something other than Christ?

What are you to bear witness about Christ? It truly is not all that difficult, but it is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, which bear witness to Christ – who bears witness in you and through you. And it is our flesh which is a weakling in the face of anything that would possibly threaten our security.

Too often, our sinful flesh wants just to keep the peace, or at the very least, avoid a possible confrontation. Our flesh would rather not bear witness to Christ. Our sinful flesh buys into the dictum, “there are two things you never discuss – religion and politics.” Our flesh rejects the work of the Spirit, and when we should bear witness and defend the faith, we keep our mouths shut – the witness we give is that we are in agreement with unbelievers.

The world around us is a vicious enemy, it is a place where we want to fit in, we want to be a welcome and to be loved by the world. Jesus says that we are in the world, but not of the world. Through Paul, God warns that we are not to be conformed to the world. (Rom. 12:1-2) The world is enticing, we want to get along with everybody, and if the world’s ideas agree with our feelings, it makes our feelings even more appealing.

To what will you bear witness, to the love of God in Christ Jesus? Or will you bear witness to love of the world?

On the cross Christ bore witness – It is finished! That which the Father has sent me into the world to complete is accomplished. I have paid the price for failing faith! I have paid the penalty for every faithless witness! With My own flesh pierced, My body nailed to the cross, I gave My life to free you from your sinful faithlessness – it is forgiven.

Christ has promised to send the Holy Spirit who will build and sustain faith. He promises that He comes according to means, that He comes in the way that He intends to grant the Holy Spirit to be a witness to us – Word and Sacrament. These are what we call the means of grace – the means by which God’s grace, purchased by Christ upon the cross, comes to us. Our gathering together bears witness to what we believe about God’s grace, even as that gathering together strengthens our faith to bear faithful witness. It is why we want to be diligent in the use of the means of Grace.

You and I fail to bear witness to Christ each and every day. We succumb to the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Each and every day we sin. And there are days, when we fail to bear witness, that we may – in so doing – even deny the very Christ to whom we are to bear witness.

Thankfully, Christ overcame the temptations of the devil! And, as we heard last week, He overcame the world. He was a faithful witness to the goodness, mercy, and grace of Father. Even at His last hour He made a faithful confession, a full witness of true faith, commending His Spirit into His Father’s hand. That perfection of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ was put to death upon the cross, it was sacrificed to purchase your forgiveness and mine. In God’s grace, He would deliver to you that forgiveness of sins and by it, strengthen your faith. And it is in the means of grace whereby Christ does exactly that.

In the word being proclaimed into your ear, Christ forgives you and overwhelms your sin. He gives to you a peace that passes all understanding which overcomes your fears and strengthens you to stand firm to witness in all your life.

When you come to the table Christ prepares before you in the presence of your enemies, the very Body which was pierced and the very Blood which He was shed is given to you as holy food and drink. Christ fills you with Himself – His very life – leaving no room for sin, His Spirit strengthening your faith to bear witness to Him.

Every time you hear the words, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – you remember your baptism. Every time you see, hear, feel, or touch water – remember your baptism. God called you by name, made you His own, and grants you His Spirit. He has come to you and made His dwelling within you. By His grace, He is your help and strength to remain in the faith – and to bear witness to Christ – even unto life everlasting. Amen.