**The Hour Has Come**

**John 16:23-33**

Rogate – Easter 6 – 05.22.2022

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

I'm not sure if you noticed, but the world is increasingly hostile to things Christianity. Some people like to say that Christianity is old-fashioned, living in the past, and needs to get with the program today. Nothing could be further from the truth!

For the last few weeks, we have been in this same chapter of John's Gospel. Two weeks ago, we read the seven verses immediately preceding this text. Last week we had verses from the same chapter, they were verse which preceded the verses we read two weeks ago. Yes, it would be more logical to do them in order – week to week.

So now I must ask you to remember two weeks back. Jesus was talking about that 'little while' when He would be departed from them, and then a little while and they would see Him. Today's text is a continuance of that monologue. In fact, since chapter thirteen of John’s Gospel, we have been with Jesus and his disciples in the upper room on the night when He was betrayed… These chapters were all from the same evening, the same conversation.

So, knowing that He will be betrayed into the hand of evil men by Judas, He says to them, “I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

At these words, the disciples declare, “Ah, now You are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that You know all things and do not need anyone to question You; this is why we believe that You came from God.”

Jesus asks them, “Do you now believe?”

Jesus knows what they are going to endure. He knows what they will suffer. He knows what is going to happen in the next few hours, the next few days, in the coming months, and in the years to come. “Do you know believe?”

More pointedly to us gathered here, He was declaring what was coming to you, dear friends. Not just that which was coming in the lives of the disciples who sat at the table with Him that day, but what was – and is – to come in your lives, in the lives of His 21st Century disciples.

His three closest disciples would be in the Garden of Gethsemane with Him, but when He was arrested, they scattered. It was on the evening of the third day after His crucifixion that He found them ***ALL*** confined behind locked doors in that upper room.

When persecution came upon them in Jerusalem after His ascension, many scattered. Of course, in their scattering they brought the news of His death and resurrection to other places.

That scattering brought Zion, St. Peter, and St. John Lutheran Churches to their respective communities. Each of these three congregations pointedly stated their confession was that of the unaltered Augsburg Confession. They came to this country in part to escape the Prussian Union, where they were forced into communion fellowship with the Reformed by governmental order. Scattered because of religious persecution.

Jesus told His disciples that they would have tribulation. Any follower of Christ knows this to be true. After Christ's ascension, many followers of Christ were persecuted unto death, Stephen being the first to killed.

But it was not just His 1st century disciples to whom He was speaking. He was speaking also to you. How bold are you to express your faith and speak it in front of others? How often have you found yourself keeping your mouth shut because of what others might say to you if you were boldly to confess the faith?

Do you keep silent so that you are not ridiculed, laughed at, or called some sort of name?

In the midst of these dire warnings, Jesus declares, “I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace.”

Maybe you're thinking, “What peace is there knowing we will be scattered and have tribulation because of our faith in Christ?”

Well, there are two kinds of peace. First, I can be at ease and have peace because I know it's coming. There is no anxiety or worry about what might or might not happen – it is going to happen. I know it! I expect it! So, I have peace.

Of course, there is also the greater peace! That's the peace of knowing my eternal situation.

Some of the questions asked earlier bring us to note that we scattered because we did not want to stay in fight. We ducked our tails between our legs and ran away. It was easier than boldly confessing what we believe. We did it to avoid tribulation. While we would not be killed for what we believe and confess, the persecution that we would endure for our confession of the truth has made us weak. We crumble with the slightest threat of unease brought into our lives. It is so much easier to go along and get along, than it is to risk rocking the boat.

Simply put, we are comfortable in the world.

When Jesus declared, “Behold the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave Me alone,” He knew what was shortly going to happen.

I’d like to declare that “the hour has come” for you today.

The hour has come for you to make a stand, or run away defeated.

The hour has come for you to confess the truth, or to be scattered.

The hour has come for you to endure tribulation, or crumble under it.

The hour has come for you to believe, or falter in faith.

Sinfully, we run away – we are scattered – we crumble – and we falter. We repent of our sinfulness, our failure to trust God in Christ Jesus.

Now the hour has come for you to confess before God your sinfulness, your frailties, and to quit trusting in yourself.

I crumble more often than stand.

I scatter to the hills as often as confess the truth.

I would rather avoid all tribulation.

And too often, my faith falters when a bold confession of what I believe is called for.

Just like the disciples, we scattered.

I am speaking only of myself, and how my own sinful flesh fails in the face of the the world. You and I are in the same boat! Thankfully, as it is the holy ark of Christendom! It is Christ’s Church! Sinners do not gather together to show off, or to brag about how good and faithful they are. They gather together because alone, without Christ, we cannot overcome the world. In fact, if we gathered together without Christ, we would still be unable to stand – look at how many claiming to be Christians have already let the world dictate what they believe, teach, and confess.

Christ knew what the world would put us through, and He overcame the world. He did not overcome the world for Himself, but for Peter, James, and John – He overcame the world for you, and me.

This is why Christ declared that His hour had come. Christ lived in the world, faced the world, endured all the world could throw at Him. He stood firm on the will of His Father, no matter what that meant He would have to endure. He was persecuted to the point of death, even death on a cross. He accomplished what we failed to accomplish! He endured that which makes us tuck our tails and run!

His hour had come – the hour for which He had lived His life in our flesh. His hour had come – the hour of taking our sins to the cross. His hour had come – to fully and completely fulfill the first commandment, trusting His Father and stepping forward in faith – going to the cross entrusting Himself into His Father’s hand.

His trust of the Father was sacrificed upon the cross for our failures to trust the Father, and step forward in faith.

He was faithful, for our unfaithfulness.

Christ’s hour has again come, to give us freely of Himself that we might live for Him.

The hour has come in which He overcomes the world in you.

He speaks strength into your ears.

His body is present, overcoming the worldly view that it is only bread.

His blood is present, overcoming the worldly view that it is only wine.

The hour has come for Christ to come to you and overcome the world in you, today and forever. Thanks be to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.