

Theme: TESTIFY!

- The Source
- The possible results

Text: John 15:26-16:4 ***“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.”***

Dear fellow disciples of Jesus Christ,

What is it that makes our church worth getting up so early for and driving 15 minutes, half hour, or even an hour? Is it family relations? Is it, as a young visitor said of our church, that we have such a beautiful building to worship in? What make Prince of Peace Lutheran Church so special?

While you may come up with several reasons, let there be one that stands out at the top of your list. One reason above all others why you are a member and worship here. That one reason? The Gospel. The good news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom we are chief. The good news that God demonstrated His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! That glorious good news is such a precious gift. This is the Water of Life which men search far and wide for to quench their spiritual thirst. This good news is the Bread of Life that feeds and nourishes sin starved souls.

But we know that this precious gift of the Gospel, this good news about sins forgiven for Jesus' sake, is not simply for us. Thursday as we considered the triumphant ascension of Jesus into heaven, we spoke of the commission which Christ gave His followers. He said, ***Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*** (Mk 16:15) Jesus gave His life for the sins of the whole world and He wants the whole world to know about it! So let us this morning consider the topic of “Testifying.” As we do we will learn from Jesus that we have been given the same glorious Tool as the Apostles had. And we will also learn from Jesus what reaction we ought to expect as we testify. May God the Holy Spirit be with us and guide us as we meditate on His holy word.

THE SOURCE OF THIS TESTIMONY

As we have studying the ministry of Jesus in our Sunday Bible Classes, one of the striking things we have found is the apparent clueless-ness of the disciples. Take Peter for example. One moment Peter is confessing his faith in Jesus as the “Christ the Son of God,” words which flowed from God the Father. And then a few verses later we read of Peter basically scolding Jesus for saying that He would suffer and die on the cross. Words which Jesus attributes to Satan himself. But then, a mere ten days after Jesus' ascension into heaven we hear this same Peter giving a glorious sermon in which he showed from the Old Testament prophecies

that Jesus indeed was the promised Messiah.

So what happened? What was it that took Peter and the other disciples from confused followers to bold preachers? Jesus tells us in the first verse of our text - ***“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”*** Here is the great difference maker. Though Jesus would ascend into heaven and His disciples would no longer be able to see Him, He promises that He would not leave them helpless and hopeless. He promises to send the greatest Helper anyone could hope for - God the Holy Spirit!

The work of the Holy Spirit is quite simply to testify of Jesus. Next Sunday as we celebrate Pentecost we will hear how the Apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The Holy Spirit would remind the Apostles of the things Jesus did and taught. The Holy Spirit would testify of Jesus in the words He gave them to write in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. What we have in the New Testament is not the rambling of men reminiscing about a man they once met, but the very words of God the Holy Spirit testifying of Jesus.

Now it may seem clear that the Gospels certainly testify of Jesus, but what about the New Testament Epistles such as Romans, Corinthians, and Hebrews? How does the Holy Spirit testify of Jesus in these books? Consider, for one, the chief doctrine of all Scripture - the doctrine of justification. This central doctrine of scripture declares that God declares us to be “not guilty” not because of anything we have done, but solely on the merits of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus through Paul, when he writes, ***For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom 3:23-24)*** Again - it is through the redemption - through the sacrifice on the cross that Jesus made - that we are justified - declared “not guilty” of sin in God’s sight.

So whether we are talking about the Apostles verbally testifying of Jesus or whether the Holy Spirit testified of Jesus through their New Testament writings - it is the Holy Spirit who is at work in them and through them. Because the Son sent this Helper from the Father, these men who seemed to be so clueless while they were with Jesus suddenly cause even their enemies to marvel at their boldness.

We see, then, that even though the disciples walked and talked with Jesus, in and of themselves were no better off than we are by ourselves. It was the Holy Spirit that made the difference for them and it is the Holy Spirit that makes the difference for us. Just as the Son sent the Helper from the Father to the disciples, so the Son has sent the Holy Spirit to you.

It is the Holy Spirit that has convicted you and led you not simply to say, but to believe that you are “*a miserable sinner*” who knows that you need God to have mercy on you for all your “*sins and iniquities*” and that you justly deserve God’s “*wrath and eternal punishment.*” If you likewise believe that God has forgiven each and every one of your sins - no matter how black, how heinous it may be - that God has forgiven you all your sins for Jesus’ sake - this is because the Spirit of truth has been sent to you. If you believe that heaven is your home not because of anything you have done, but solely because Jesus lived, died, and rose again - this is because the Son has sent the Helper from the Father to you.

Each one of us has been given the same powerful Helper from heaven to assist us in testifying of Jesus to others. God the Holy Spirit is an unlimited source of power by whom the Apostles testified of Jesus and by whom we are able to testify of Jesus. By the Holy Spirit we are able to say to the world, “I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins and for the sins

of the whole world. I believe that apart from Jesus, there is no forgiveness of sins - for no other payment for sins has been made than Jesus suffering and death.” The Source which the Apostles and Prophets had to testify of Jesus is the same Source that has been given to each one of you - the Holy Spirit who testifies of Jesus.

THE POSSIBLE OUTCOME

So if we know we have the only good news that saves, what is it that keeps us from testifying of Jesus to our family, friends, classmates, and co-workers? Why is it that we hear people glorifying sinful living and we don't speak up to glorify Christ and godly living? One word - FEAR. It is fear that keeps us silent when people use the name of God in vain or blaspheme our Savior Jesus. We are afraid we'll look “uncool” if we testify of Jesus to others. We're afraid we'll get laughed at. Or we're afraid we'll lose our friends or lose our job. Whether it is real or perceived, it is fear nonetheless.

In our text, Jesus prepares us for persecution so when it comes we *should not be made to stumble*. Jesus wants us to be prepared for persecution so when it comes we aren't shocked, but can say - “Ah-ha! This is just as Jesus said it would be.” Jesus told His disciples what was going to happen to them - *“They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.”* When you read the book of Acts this is exactly what you see taking place. As the followers of Jesus went into the world to spread the Gospel, they were excommunicated from synagogues. Stephen and James were killed because they testified of Jesus. Before his conversion, the Apostle Paul, then Saul, thought he was serving God by trying to destroy the Christian church.

But why? What would move men to do such horrible acts against those who brought a glorious message of full and free forgiveness in Jesus' name? This too Jesus reveals - *And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me*. While such individuals may view themselves to be very religious or spiritual persons, such hostility against the Gospel and its messengers show that they do not know the one true God. Jesus Himself declared to the Scribes and Pharisees that they neither knew Him nor the Father who sent Him. If they had known the Father, they would have known Jesus whom He sent.

Such hostility against the Gospel has continued throughout the centuries. In the days of the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church which claimed to be the Church of Christ on earth, demonstrated that it did not know the Father nor Jesus. When Martin Luther and his companions testified of Jesus that we are declared righteous not because of our works, but only through faith in Jesus Christ - these “Lutherans” were excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church. By their words and actions they demonstrated that they did not know the Father nor the Son.

As we testify about Jesus, our Savior wants us to be prepared for this possible outcome. We might lose friends, we might lose our job, we might be kicked out of our church, we may even be ostracized from our family. But Jesus told us to expect such things. When they happen we should learn to respond, “Aha! Just as Jesus told me it would be!” We live in a world which is hostile to the Gospel. A world that does not know the Father nor Jesus whom He has sent.

If that happens, we read in Luke 6 that Jesus tells us to jump for joy! *Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.* (Lk 6:23-24) What is being done to you for testifying of Jesus is the same thing that has been done to countless

Christians since the beginning of the world for testifying of Jesus.

Should fear of persecution cause us to keep our mouths shut about Jesus? That is certainly what the devil is hoping for. He hopes that through fear you will not take this precious message of the Gospel and share it with others. He hopes that the fear of being made fun of will keep Christians silent about the truth. May God the Holy Spirit embolden us as He emboldened those disciples, that we may testify of Jesus throughout all the world. Even if it means that only one soul is brought to Christ, than that is one less soul headed to hell! May the Holy Spirit work in us and through us to testify of Jesus! Amen.