

## Proclaim Jesus with Confidence

1. He defines our mission
2. He silences our fears
3. He reminds us of the privilege and his blessings

During one summer back in high school, I took a summer job at a lumber mill. On my first day at my new job, my foreman led me into the mill. The mill was a noisy place, with chainsaws and other power equipment under constant operation. And because I had been instructed to do so, I was wearing my earplugs as I entered the mill. My foreman began to give instructions about the responsibilities of my particular job. He was instructing me about my mission. But because I had my earplugs in, I only caught bits and pieces of what he was telling me. And before I had opportunity to ask any questions, my foreman walked off to tend to other business. I was unclear about my mission. I was afraid of the task which lie before me. I was not able to fulfill my task with confidence.

This morning God's Word reminds us about our mission in life. Our mission is to proclaim Jesus with confidence. But the Lord has left us with no uncertainty or questions about this mission. He clearly defines our mission. Jesus also silences the fears we have about our mission. Furthermore, Jesus continually reminds us of the privilege of witnessing and the blessings which follow.

Our Lord has clearly defined our mission in life. Our mission is to proclaim the mission which Christ accomplished. Jesus came to our world to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was near. In fact, Jesus is the one who ushers people into the kingdom of heaven. He declared that he would free people from the slavery of sin which separated them from God. And that is exactly what he did. By a life unblemished by the stains of sins and by the death he died in our place, Jesus made us God's very own people. And now as God's children, our heavenly Father has called us to proclaim Jesus to the world. This is the mission which our Lord has given to us.

Now our Lord has not commissioned us with this great task and left us on our own. Jesus leads us in our mission to proclaim his name to the world. We have Christ's assurance that whenever we tell someone the truth about sin and salvation, he is there with us. He wants us to be his witnesses.

Our mission, however, will not be without its struggles. Our lesson this morning is really a continuation of the account of Jesus sending out his twelve disciples to the people of Israel. Jesus minced no words about the opposition his disciples would face. He said, **"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves...Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in the synagogues...They will arrest you...All men will hate you because of me."** Should the Twelve have been surprised at the things Jesus was telling them? Should we be surprised when Jesus tells us that we will face opposition and anger and misunderstanding when we proclaim his name? To be sure, we face the same things about which Jesus warned his disciples. The world considers us unloving because we declare disgusting ways of life sinful-ways of life which are embraced by so many today as acceptable. The world considers us narrow-minded because we have the audacity to claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven, and that people who don't believe in Jesus as their Savior go to hell. Should we be surprised at the opposition which the Word of God encounters?

Jesus tells us: **"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup> It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!"** Opposition to the gospel is not a surprise to us. Jesus met this same sort of antagonism when *he* proclaimed the good news of salvation. What happened when Jesus went to eat at the home of Matthew the tax collector? The Pharisees were appalled that Jesus would associate with "sinners." What happened when Jesus drove demons out of people? The Pharisees proclaimed that Jesus drove out demons by the power of the prince of demons, Beelzebub, which is another name for Satan. Such a claim is completely ridiculous, senseless. Nevertheless, it exemplified the way the world generally received Jesus. Yes, Jesus' words ring true: **"If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!"** We can expect to face the very same things Jesus faced when he proclaimed the truth of God's Word. And we can rejoice that we, the servants of Christ, have been treated just as our Master.

But sometimes we fail to rejoice that Jesus has counted us worthy to suffer for his name. All of us have an Old Adam. It is the sinful nature which still resides in us. It causes us to despise our mission of proclaiming the good news of Jesus to the world. We end up avoiding opportunities to share the message of Jesus because we are afraid of the way it may be received. We worry about the way people will think about us if we make it known that our faith in Jesus is important to us. We fear being thought of as hypocrites or religious extremists. We let our fears get in the way of the love of our Savior.

Jesus, however, has assured us that there is forgiveness for the times when we have fallen short as his representatives. And not only does he forgive us for our fears and lack of trust. Today Jesus comes to us with his

gracious promises which silence our fears about witnessing his name. Listen to the ways Jesus addresses our fears. **“So do not be afraid of them (He’s speaking of those who will oppose us when we share the gospel with them). There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.”**

Please understand: it is a present reality that the kingdom of God has come. Christ truly has begun his reign in the hearts of those who believe in him. There is no doubt that Christians win the victory and those who reject Christ are being defeated. This is our Savior’s promise to us. But presently this truth is not so evident. Many times it seems that Christians are the ones losing the battle in this life and the unbelievers are the ones who are getting ahead. This can be very discouraging at times. We may ask, “Is it really worth being a Christian?”

Jesus gives us the answer this morning. It’s a resounding “Yes!” In the present world Christ’s rule and our victory are concealed and hidden. But on the Last Day when Jesus returns our victory will be revealed. Therefore, we have no reason to doubt. In fact, Christ’s promise gives us every reason to declare on the rooftops the amazing truths of our Savior.

Jesus offers us another promise to silence our fears. **“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”** Those who oppose the message of God’s Word may mistreat us and abuse us. And we can expect that. After all, a servant is not above his master. Indeed, Jesus suffered greatly and was put to death because of opposition to his message. Likewise, Christ’s Church has always been a church which has suffered under the cross. Think of the apostles: the lives of each of them, except for the life of John, came to an end with the ultimate testimony of their faith. They suffered death because they wished to witness to the love of Christ rather than compromise God’s truth. Why were they so bold? Why can we be so bold in confessing Christ? Because we recognize that Christ’s enemies may mistreat us and abuse us and may even take our lives. But that is all they can take. They cannot kill our souls. They cannot do us spiritual harm. Only the Almighty God has the power to destroy both body and soul. If there is anyone to fear, it is God, who holds our eternal destiny in his hands.

But Jesus goes on to assure us that we have no reason to fear God’s power over our eternal life. Jesus assures us that God’s love and care for us are immeasurable. **“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. <sup>30</sup> And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”** Jesus uses two comparisons that go from a lesser thing to a greater thing. Sparrows are a rather insignificant thing to us humans. Jesus tells us that in his day you could get a couple of them for a penny. We don’t pay much attention to those things which have such little value. But those little birds are valuable to God. He knows where all the sparrows are and he knows if one of them falls to the ground. And again, the hairs of our head are rather insignificant things.

Even those of us who are worried about going bald typically don’t get too worked up over the loss of one hair from our head. But God knows the exact number of hairs that we have. Now, if God deems the sparrows of the air and the hairs of our heads significant enough to care about, how much greater is the care and love and concern God has for us, the ones he has declared to be his very special creation, the ones he has chosen to be his witnesses in this world. Jesus leaves no doubt in our hearts. The God who has called us to declare his praises will watch over us as we spread the good news of Jesus.

After all, there is nothing more important in our lives than sharing Jesus with those around us. After dispelling our fears and reminding us of his promises, Jesus reminds us of the privilege we have and blessings we experience for carrying out this great mission. **“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”** This business of witnessing our faith, it is not something that we can be lukewarm about. The love of Christ is so great that he was willing to give up his life on the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world. There is not a person who has lived or who is living or who will ever live whose sins have not been paid for with the blood of the Lamb of God.

We have the high privilege of sharing this message. This is a message that people desperately need to hear. Because eternal life is at stake. Everyone needs to know that Jesus is their Savior. Because those who confess Jesus as their Savior are the ones whom Jesus will acknowledge before his heavenly Father. They receive the blessings that flow from confessing the Christ. However, the reverse is also true: those who do not come to confess Jesus are lost for eternity.

Keep these truths before you as you go about your week. When you see family members who are wandering from the faith, leave your fears at the foot of the cross. Remember God’s promises. He will be with you. He will give you the words to say. When you encounter your neighbors whom you know do not attend church, think of them as they truly are: souls bought with the blood of the Lamb, people who need to hear the truths which you know and embrace. Rejoice that the Lord has called you to carry out this mission. Experience the privilege and blessings of sharing Jesus with the world. Proclaim Christ with confidence. Amen.