

In Nomine Iesu

***Exaudi*, the Sunday after the Ascension 2024 Remember, Christ came to redeem, not to destroy - John 15:26-16:4**

“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. “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.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. Dear believers in the ascended Lord.

Last Sunday we heard that Jesus told the twelve, “The time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly of the Father.” (John 16:25) By telling “plainly” He meant that He would suffer and die, that is, He would no longer just tell, He would do. Jesus was preparing them for what the prophets had promised about the Messiah, preparing them to understand what He said to them at the beginning, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” They could not know the Father with full clarity

until He, the Son, was crucified, until He did what God had promised Israel through all the prophets. In this way the full extent of God's wrath toward sin would be revealed to them in the crucifixion. But more importantly, the **Father's even greater love** for fallen sinners would be shown to them and to the whole world.

I

The disciples were witnesses of His arrest and trial, just as they were witnesses of His earthly ministry. They walked with Him and sat at His feet for three years. In that time Jesus repeatedly told them about the nature of God's mercy in word and in deed. He made the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the sick well. To the poor in spirit, on whose shoulders the church of that day laid heavy burdens and then in their trials abandoned them, He preached forgiveness of sins. Now, He would show them God's greatest wonder, that the Father would not spare His own Son, but give Him into death for us and for our salvation. The disciples would see that the Son of God became man in order **to redeem, not to destroy man.**

When Jesus was crucified the disciples fled. They forgot all Jesus had taught them, all they'd heard and now seen. But Jesus had prepared them better than they knew. Knowing they would desert Him, He'd assured them: "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you

loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.” (John 14:25-29)

In today’s text Jesus speaks the same way: “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.” (vv. 26-27) When the disciples would lose their faith at His death and with it their ability to bear witness, the Holy Spirit would remind them of all things. He would bring remembrance to their hearts and minds of all that Jesus had said of Himself. After all, how many times had they heard, “the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; they will mock Him, scourge Him, spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again”? (Mark 10:33-34) To be sure, the disciples knew what He said would happen when the time came. But when the time did come they forgot His words and trusted their own understanding. No one could rise from the dead, they were sure. So strongly were they captive to their own wisdom that when they saw Jesus with their own eyes that first Easter evening, they still thought He must be a ghost.

St. Luke tells what happened when Jesus appeared: “He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the

Scriptures.” (Luke 24:44-45) Now finally they grasped and believed His words. How did Jesus open their mind? St. John explains: “When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So, Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, **Receive the Holy Spirit.**” (John 20:20-22) He gave them the Spirit, who brought all His promises to their remembrance.

II

Dear friends, why do we preach Jesus Sunday after Sunday? Why do we say that everyone, adult or child, should be in church even when it appears, especially in the case of children, that they may not understand what is going on? Because just as Jesus taught the twelve for three and a half years and then gave them the witness of the Holy Spirit, first at Pentecost and then in the words which would become the books of the New Testament, so too must we still listen to His words. Through the proclamation of the Scriptures the Spirit Jesus sent still brings to our remembrance all He said, still teaches us what those words mean, still puts before us the picture of Christ crucified, the **picture of God’s love** for all people.

It is important to know where we can find the true witness about Christ and God’s love for all, that we can have certainty that we are Jesus’ disciples. Why? Because Jesus warns us, as He warned the twelve, the time would come, when they not only would see clearly and understand the **love** of the heavenly Father, but would see also the **wrath** of those refused to accept the Father’s love, “They will put you out of synagogues; yes, the time

is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. 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.” (vv. 2-4) The disciples would remember because the Holy Spirit would help them remember, just as Jesus here promised, and so they would not fall into fear and doubt, and falter in the face of persecution.

It should come as no surprise to us that Jesus said this. Since His birth such things had been predicted. When Jesus’ parents took Him for the first time to the temple in Jerusalem, Simeon held the baby in his arms and said of Him: “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for **a sign which will be spoken against** (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34-35) When Jesus was raised up on the cross **He became that sign**. His disciples have been persecuted and even killed ever since by those who think that by doing so they are serving God. But we might ask, “But wait a minute, if such people believe in God, how could do such things as believers?” Jesus explained the bitter truth: “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.”

The sad truth is that not everyone who claims to believe in God does. Even sadder is that some people use religion, even Christianity, to hide behind and do their evil, and then claim that what they do is in the name of and to the

glory of God. This is seldom talked about in polite circles. But we see it all around us in our world today. People do evil, and then call the evil good.

And who suffers? Not only those cast out of the synagogues, as Jesus said would happen, or in our day churches; not only those who are killed in the name of God; but also – **and especially!** - those who see such evil carried out **in God's name**, and then stay away from the preaching of the gospel out of fear or doubt. **This is the real tragedy.** Vengeance and violence have no place in Christ's church. St. Luke wrote: "As [His disciples] went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for [Jesus]. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man **did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.**'" (Luke 9:52-56) James and John in that moment were not guided by the Spirit, the Spirit of their Lord. Their desire to **take vengeance** on those they perceived as enemies of their Lord was **of another spirit** entirely. The **purpose** of Christ and the **mission** He gave to His church is to save all through the preaching of the Gospel. This Jesus did; this He commanded us to do. He warns us against those who do what He said not to do, so that we would not stumble when we see and hear of such things.

Remember, dear friends, the Son of God came into the world to redeem and **not** to destroy. **Remember!**

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The Christian Church is a kingdom of grace and mercy. Its weapon is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Ephesians 6:17) Its battle is spiritual; its battlefield the human soul. Its commander in the struggle is the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. Hear His gracious voice as we have it in the witness of the apostles, in the Holy Scriptures. Here we have His Spirit and His teaching, and His great reward – forgiveness, life, and salvation. Our mission is to give the forgiveness, life, and salvation He won for all people to all. For this reason He came into the world – to redeem, not to condemn. **Remember!** Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria