

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Third Sunday after Easter, May 3, 2020

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 37 (238:1) 271, 401, 52

Lessons: Psalm 98; Revelation 21:1-5; John 13:31-35

Text: John 21:20-25 NKJV

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow Redeemed in Christ our Savior,

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the risen Savior, showed himself alive many times and in various places during the 40 days between his resurrection and ascension into heaven. One such occasion was at the Sea of Galilee where 7 of the disciples had gone fishing. Jesus identified himself as the risen Lord by performing two miracles. He made it possible for the disciples to catch a great number of fish when they let down their nets according to Jesus' command. He also provided a meal of bread and fish for them in a miraculous manner.

After this, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times. Peter knew that his three-fold denial of Jesus on the night of his betrayal was the reason why Jesus asked him if he loved him. Peter had repented of that sin of denying Jesus, and he assured the Lord that he did indeed love him. Then Jesus reinstated Peter as an apostle and gave him the command to preach the Gospel to young and old, saying, ***“Feed my lambs.”*** ***“Take care of my sheep,”*** John 21:15.16 NIV.

It is at this point that our text begins. We have in our text:

VALUABLE LESSONS FOR JESUS' FOLLOWERS.

- 1. Trust the wisdom of Jesus' guidance to manage the affairs of his Church.**
- 2. Accept the testimony of John's Gospel to strengthen your faith.**

“Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, ‘Lord, who is the one who betrays you?’” Jesus had just told Peter that he would glorify God by dying a martyr's death and then he said to him: ***“Follow Me.”*** v. 19. As they walked, Peter looked around and saw John following them. Peter's thoughts were immediately directed to John and his future as an apostle. John is not identified in our text by name. He identifies himself by calling himself ***“the disciple whom Jesus loved,”*** and as the one who was leaning on Jesus' breast as they reclined at the Last Passover supper table. John was the one who asked Jesus who would betray him. The importance of mentioning this in our text is simply to provide a careful and positive identification of John as the man referred to.

“Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, ‘But Lord, what about this man?’” Peter showed that he had not been cured of his forwardness. That is what prompted him to ask about John and his future. That was Peter's nature to be forward and ask questions like this. This was Jesus' answer. ***“If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow me.”*** In a kindly way Jesus told Peter that what happened to John and how John should serve the Lord and when he would die, was not to be Peter's concern. That was the Lord's business. Peter was simply to concentrate on following his Lord and Master. Jesus did not say what would happen to John or how and when John would die. Jesus simply said, ***“If I will that he remain till I come.”***

Others among Jesus' followers misunderstood this statement. Our text says, ***“Then this saying went out among the brethren, that this disciple should not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, ‘If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?’”*** Those who had the idea that John wouldn't die had not listened carefully enough to what Jesus actually said. If the thought of John living until Jesus came again at the end of the world sounds strange to us, we must not forget that Jesus taught the people at that time just as he

teaches us today, that we should expect his coming at any time. The fact that John died a natural death as an old man, and the fact that we are now looking back on something that happened nearly 2,000 years ago, should not cause us to be deceived about when Jesus' coming will be. In any era of this world's history since Jesus' ascension, the warning of Jesus is to be heeded: ***"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect,"*** Luke 12:40.

In this there is a lesson for us to learn as Jesus' followers. We should trust the wisdom of Jesus' guidance in the affairs of his Church. The Roman Catholic Church has not learned this lesson, for the doctrine of the Church of Rome is that Peter was the first pope and that the pope is the Vicar of Christ here on earth. In other words, they teach that the pope is taking Jesus' place as the head of his Church. This false teaching is based on the misinterpretation of Jesus' words as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. (It is significant to note that the Roman Catholic Church did not begin teaching the primacy of the pope until the 10th century.) Peter had made a good confession for all the disciples when he told Jesus, ***"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"*** Matthew 16:16 (NIV). Jesus told Peter that he was greatly blessed by the heavenly Father to be able to make such a confession. Then Jesus said, ***"And I tell you that you are Peter, ("Petros" in the Greek language) and on this rock ("Petra" in the Greek language) I will build my church,"*** Matthew 16:18 (NIV). According to the Greek, the original language of the New Testament, Jesus did not say he would build his church on the man Peter, but on himself as the Rock of our Salvation and upon the rock-like confession Peter made. Jesus certainly did not speak to Peter as one who would be his vicar or substitute, the head of his Church on earth. He told Peter that managing the affairs of the Holy Christian Church was not to be Peter's concern.

Let us learn this valuable lesson: Jesus is the Lord of the Church, and he rules and guides all the affairs of his Church. The Bible says that God the Father ***"raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet, and appointed him to be head over everything for the church."*** Ephesians 1:20-22 (NIV). Thank God that we don't have this teaching that some mere man is the head of the Holy Christian Church!

Therefore, we need never be concerned or anxious about the affairs of Christ's Church, the Holy Christian Church, because Jesus is the King of the Church, the Chief Shepherd. He guides all his followers and us by his Holy Word. He protects us as the sheep of his fold. He prays to his heavenly Father to keep us as his own dear children. He ever blesses and preserves us to life eternal. Jesus the Good Shepherd says: ***"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."*** John 10:27-28 (NIV). Jesus is the Lord of the Church. All things are in his hand. Let us therefore follow Jesus as our Lord and Master according to his Word. What he has not revealed to us in his Word need not concern us, for it is not necessary for our salvation.

Another valuable lesson that we as Jesus' followers may learn from our text is to **accept the testimony of John's Gospel to strengthen our faith.**

2.

John identifies himself as the disciple referred to in the first part of our text: ***"This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true."*** The evangelist John is the author of this Gospel of John in the Bible, as well as the 3 Epistles of John and the book of Revelation in the Bible. He claims that his testimony is true. Now, if this were the writing of a mere man, we could dispute his claim that it was the truth. But the Bible says, ***"All Scripture is God-breathed,"*** 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV). It also gives us this passage, ***"Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,"*** 2 Peter 1:21 (NIV). What John wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit is the truth. We believe that every word of the Bible is God's Word. Therefore we also believe that there can be no error or contradiction in the Bible and that the entire Bible is the full truth of God. By faith, then, we accept the testimony of John in the Gospel of John as the full truth.

We should accept the testimony of John's Gospel to strengthen our faith. First, before we consider that further, let us note that John says in our text, ***"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if***

they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” Many words of Jesus and many deeds he did are not recorded in the Bible. And what is not recorded there does not have to concern us because God himself did not want it revealed to us.

Let us consider all that God did reveal to us by inspiration of the Holy Ghost as it is recorded in John’s Gospel. We value the Gospel of John for the reason that it contains so many precious Bible passages concerning Jesus, especially the deity of Christ. The devil is causing many false teachers to attack the deity of Christ today. So we need the strengthening of our faith which this Gospel of John affords as it teaches us that Jesus is indeed the very Son of God. John’s Gospel begins with that truth: ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*** John 1:1. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word who also became true man. John writes, ***“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,”*** John 1:14. In this Gospel of John we also learn that Jesus created all things at the beginning of time. ***“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made,”*** John 1:3. In this Gospel we have the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, ***“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,”*** John 3:16. It is John’s Gospel that tells us of the honor Jesus should have as the Son of God: ***“All men should honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”*** John 5:23. In the Gospel of St. John Jesus says that he is the eternal God. ***“Before Abraham was, I am.”*** John 8:58. He teaches that he is true God, equal with the Father. ***“I and the Father are one,”*** John 10:30.

These and many other precious passages are the testimony of John recorded in his Gospel. May we accept his testimony for the strengthening of our faith. When Satan seeks to trouble us with denials of Jesus’ deity, let us remember these Bible passages. Then also we may have this confidence, as Jesus says, ***“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,”*** John 8:31-32. Amen.

(Reprinted from Ministry By Mail for April 24, 2005)