

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Trinity Sunday, May 30, 2021

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

Hymns: 250 (249) 381, 23:1-3, 23:4

Lessons: Isaiah 63:11-16; 1 Corinthians 2:1-12; Matthew 28:16-20

Sermon Text: 2 Timothy 1:8-14,

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ Jesus dear fellow redeemed,

Today on the church year calendar is Trinity Sunday. It is the beginning of the non-festival half of the church year. Though the words “Trinity” and “Triune” are not found in the Bible, the teaching of the Holy Trinity is taught in many Bible passages. We therefore use these words to express the truth of the Bible that there is only one God and that he is revealed in the Bible in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Paul spoke of all three persons of the Holy Trinity in the words of our text that he addressed to Timothy, his young co-worker. It is important to note that Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison. He calls himself the Lord’s **“prisoner”** in our text and speaks of his suffering for the Gospel’s sake. It reminds us of the fact that all believers in Christ must expect to suffer for the Gospel’s sake. St. Paul wrote, **“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,”** 2 Timothy 3:12. He also wrote to the believers at Philippi, **“I consider everything as a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things,”** Philippians 3:8. Unless we know that suffering for the Gospel’s sake is a fact of Christian life, we will not understand many things that happen in our lives and that we read in the history of the Holy Christian Church.

We need such words as Paul writes in our text to remind us

WHY WE NEED NOT BE ASHAMED TO SUFFER FOR THE GOSPEL’S SAKE.

- 1. We teach about Christ’s person, work, and doctrine;**
- 2. It is the Father’s love for us in Christ that has resulted in our salvation;**
- 3. It is the Holy Spirit’s work to keep us in the faith and guard us from teaching error.**

St. Paul exhorted Timothy, **“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.”** Timothy was a young pastor who was supervising the work of the churches in Asia Minor as Paul’s representative. Paul was in prison in Rome and he expected to die there. In this epistle he said, **“I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure,”** 2 Timothy 4:6. This epistle was a personal letter of a faithful apostle to Timothy, a young pastor who was to carry on the work of preaching the Gospel. Thus he exhorted Timothy not to be ashamed of him and not to be ashamed of the gospel.

Since we are followers of Christ we also are engaged in the work of spreading the gospel to others. It is very necessary, then, that we not be ashamed of testifying of our Lord. This is what the work of the Church is all about; to testify of Jesus our Lord and proclaim the message of the redemption of sinners accomplished by Jesus.

We should not be ashamed to testify of what the Gospel message teaches concerning the person, work, and doctrine of Christ. Concerning Jesus’ person, we should testify that he is the God-Man. The Bible speaks of Jesus as both God and Man. The Bible tells us, **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,”** Isaiah 9:6. It tells us, **“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman...”** Galatians 4:4. In the account of Jesus’ birth we are told the words of the angel to the shepherds, **“Today in the town of David a**

Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord,” Luke 2:11. St. Paul testified ***“In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,”*** Colossians 2:9. So we join with Peter in confessing of the man Jesus, ***“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”*** Matthew 16:16.

What we testify about Jesus includes his work of redemption. The Gospel tells how Jesus redeemed lost sinners from sin, death, and Satan’s power. Paul writes that he ***“gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age,”*** Galatians 1:4. Jesus gave himself on the cross and shed his blood in his sacrificial death on the cross. John writes, ***“The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin,”*** 1 John 1:7. Paul writes ***“when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son,”*** Romans 5:10. How can we be ashamed of the Redeemer whose work of reconciliation is the reason why God declares us righteous and no longer counts our sins against us?

In testifying of Jesus’ person and work, we are also proclaiming Christ’s doctrine. For it is Jesus’ Word that we preach and teach. The Bible calls it ***“the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God,”*** 2 Corinthians 4:4. Jesus tells us, ***“I am the good shepherd. ... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me,”*** John 10:11 and 27. This, then, is the first reason why we should not be ashamed to suffer for the Gospel’s sake, for it is Christ’s person, work, and doctrine that we teach. How can we be ashamed of the words of our Good Shepherd?

The second reason given in our text for not being ashamed to suffer for the Gospel’s sake is that ***it is the Father’s love for us in Christ Jesus that has resulted in our salvation.***

2.

God ***“has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”*** God did not save us because of our works. He did not save us because of anything we have done. He determined to save us for Christ’s sake long before we were born, ***“before the beginning of time,”*** our text says. From eternity already God prepared a way of salvation for the whole human race. This was ***“according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,”*** Ephesians 1:9. Then ***“when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons,”*** Galatians 4:4-5. God’s ***“grace was revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”*** In his Gospel John writes about Jesus ***“the Word,”*** and says, ***“the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning,”*** John 1:1-2. Then he says, ***“The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us,”*** John 1:14. Jesus the Son of God also became a true man so that he could die for us. This he did ***“so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death,”*** Hebrews 2:14-15. Jesus was raised from the dead, assuring us that he has won the victory over sin and death for us, and that God the Father has accepted his work of redemption for our salvation. Peter writes, ***“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade,”*** 1 Peter 1:3-4.

Our text teaches us that Jesus has been revealed to us in the Gospel. He has ***“brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*** This is why we call the Gospel the good news. Paul adds, ***“Of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.”*** St. Paul was sent by God as an apostle to announce the glad tidings of salvation to sinners. And he says, ***“That is why I am suffering as I am.”*** This is also the good news our Lord wants us to proclaim and publish and teach in every place where he gives us the opportunity. Surely, we should not be ashamed to speak of what our Savior has done for all sinners. Through Jesus’ work of redemption eternal death has been abolished for us and we have the sure hope of eternal life. Should we be ashamed of that message or afraid to confess it for fear of what unbelievers will do to us?

Another convincing reason why we need not be ashamed to suffer for the Gospel’s sake is that ***it is the Holy Spirit’s work to keep us in the faith and guard us against teaching error.***

3.

After speaking of his suffering for the Gospel's sake, Paul says, ***"Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."*** Paul speaks as one who was firmly convinced that he had the absolute truth of God. He was sure of this because he had not concocted these teachings from his human reason, but had received them from God. Furthermore, he was convinced that his soul's salvation was secure in the hands of the Lord.

We too may be firmly convinced that we have the truth of God because our teachings are founded on the Word of God. The psalmist writes, ***"The word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does,"*** Psalm 33:4. We also are sure of our eternal salvation because it is in the hands of our God. ***"Through faith,"*** Peter writes, we ***"are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time,"*** 1 Peter 1:5. It is the Holy Spirit who keeps us in the true faith. He does his work in us through the means of grace, the Gospel in word and sacrament. It is our precious assurance concerning the Gospel, as Paul writes, that it is ***"the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes,"*** Romans 1:16.

Finally Paul exhorted Timothy in the words of our text, ***"What you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."*** What Timothy heard from Paul's lips was what he was to ***"keep as the pattern of sound teaching."*** That we today still have this ***"sound teaching"*** of the Gospel is an amazing gift of God, especially since so many in our day have given up the true teaching of God's Word. Just as Timothy was exhorted, so we also are to guard what has been entrusted to us. We are not to surrender it or cease to teach it for any seemingly outward advantage, such as membership in a large church organization, or because people will praise us for teaching what appeals to their human reason. We are to hold to Jesus' teaching (John 8:31). We can do that only by the power of the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit guiding us we will continue in Jesus' word and guard the precious truths we have received from the Lord. Jesus has promised, ***"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you,"*** John 15:7.

Father of glory, to your name immortal praise we give,
Who does an act of grace proclaim and bid us rebels live.

Immortal honor to the Son, who makes your anger cease;
Our lives He ransomed with His own and died to make our peace.

To your almighty Spirit be immortal glory given,
Whose teachings bring us near to You and train us up for heaven." Amen.
(Adapted from The Lutheran Hymnal 248)

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