**Matthew 10:5a 21-33 June 21, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from the Gospel of Matthew the 10th chapter here re-reading these words. “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Preparation. It is a responsibility of parents to their children but it isn’t unique only to the vocation of taking care of a child. Proper preparation is the job of anyone who loves and wishes to support someone who is going into a different or difficult situation. Take for example a child going off to summer camp. A child that goes off to a new place with new people has to be prepared. They will need the right supplies, and they will need realistic expectations for what they will be doing and what will be required of them. So it is with a new job, and many other experiences in life. Proper preparation means that both the good and the bad have to be communicated. It’s not enough to just tell the child who is going to camp that there will be fun, games, swimming, and other activities. The good times are not the only thing the child needs to know about. They also need to be prepared for long hikes, pitching their own tents, and sleeping on the ground. In the same way a new employee can be told of all the wonderful benefits they can expect working at a new job, but they also need to hear about the hectic times, the busy moments when they will be called upon to do strenuous or stressful work for the good of the company. Preparation is important in these situations, and also important for us in this life. And who can better prepare us for what we will experience, than our omniscient; all knowing Lord, Jesus Christ. Because here in our Gospel lesson we see Jesus preparing His disciples. And He doesn’t simply tell them the good and exclude the bad. Jesus doesn’t sugar coat anything. He tells them the truth of what they will face in this world on account of bearing His name. And it isn’t pretty.

Jesus tells them the truth, and it’s the same for us. Last week in our Gospel lesson from Matthew 10 Jesus describes the disciples going out into the world as “sheep amongst wolves”. He promises them that they will be persecuted, even promising torture by flogging and being dragged before governors and kings, not on account of anything they have done, but simply because of Christ. What Jesus is attempting to do is prepare the disciples for the true nature of this world. For this world, since the moment that man has fallen into sin, is a scary place for Christians. It’s changed nature can be traced back to Cain and Abel. Abel was killed by his brother Cain out of jealousy, because Abel’s sacrifice was more pleasing in God’s sight. The flood is an example of how Noah and His family were scorned by their neighbors and the rest of mankind for not giving in to the pleasures of this world, and conforming to the desires of their hearts. And the examples go on and on from there. Just page through the Bible and you will see, that prophets and evangelists don’t attempt to hide the persecution they have faced for following God’s commands and bearing the name of Jesus Christ. From the Israelites slavery in Egypt to David fighting countless wars against a pagan enemy who mocks God. To our Old Testament lesson this morning, where Jeremiah is bemoaning the fact that He is ridiculed and persecuted by the enemies of God and our Epistle lesson from Romans, that reminds us that Paul is writing to a Roman Church that resides in the shadow of the Coliseum. A monument to man’s self-satisfaction, and a bloody spectacle of the persecution suffered there by those who believe in Jesus Christ. The reality is the world is not safe for Christians. This world is a scary place.

Thankfully for us, in our present context today we do not need to fear that anyone will drag us from our homes and kill us for being Christians like in other parts of the world. But this world still remains, a scary place. Because bearing the name of Christ doesn’t mean that we are free from ridicule and scorn no matter where we live. If anything the revolutionary invention of the Internet has made it possible for Christ’s name to be publicly mocked by a multitude of skeptics and enemies of God’s Word and God’s Holy Name. For while we don’t see “Brother giving Brother over to physical death” as it states in Matthew 10, in our present context here in Michigan, family member is talking about family member behind their back. Children are rebellious against their parents. Family squabbles get in the way of the proclamation of the Gospel. And all you have to do is look around at our changing culture to see that Jesus’ words are true when he says to His disciples “and you will be **hated** by all for my name’s sake.”

These words cut to the heart for we all desire to be accepted and loved. And sadly it causes us to compromise our own beliefs in order to be accepted, or to simply, hide them all together. Because who wants to live contrary to a world that rejects Jesus Christ? Who would ever want to be persecuted? Who wants to face a blind hatred that comes only from the nature of this world which is, sin? For sin brings darkness, a darkness that clouds the judgment of the mind from the sinful nature of the heart. It is a darkness that grows each and every day in our world. It is a darkness that cannot be snuffed out or destroyed by our own actions, because we are the problem. We are sinners. We were born into sin. We live in a sinful society, and no matter where we go, we will be living with fellow sinners. We can’t escape sin because we are the problem. And sin is what makes this world so scary. Sin is a reality that we all must live with while we remain in this world. And the world wants nothing more than to suffocate the light of Christ, in the darkness of sin.

A scary world. That’s where we live. But Jesus doesn’t tell us only the good and hide from us the bad. He prepares us for the coming persecution, just as He did His disciples. For He has not thrust us out into the madness of this fallen creation without hope, but He has prepared us. He has given us comfort in these words. “So have no fear of them.” “Do not fear.”, “Do not be afraid” and “Fear not”. Those are the words that Jesus uses with those who behold him in His majesty, like after He had resurrected from the dead and appeared before His disciples. Those are the words that the angels use when speaking with those privileged enough to be standing in the presence of divine holiness. And so we too are standing in His holiness today. Basking in His presence. While our fears may be rooted in the sinful nature of this world we have nothing to fear, even if everything around us were to be destroyed. Even if a pagan nation were to come and carry us away to slavery. Even if we were facing death at the hands of those who persecute the church with a blind hatred. Because no matter what befalls us in this life, nothing can destroy God’s love for us. While the enemies of God who live in this scary world may kill the body they cannot destroy the soul. For our souls, are God’s. Our sinful flesh may pass away, and we know that inevitably we all will die, but our souls will be with the Lord. And they will be with Him in a place that is not scary like the world we live in. A place where there is no persecution, torture, or pain. But a place of glory, of divine holiness, and where eternal happiness is found in the one who has brought us there. For we will be with Him, for all eternity, as evidence of the love that He has for us.

And we have comfort in the fact that no matter what the skeptics of this world say the truth will be revealed in the end. Jeremiah laments that those who continually mock his prophecy seem in the eyes of His community to be right. And so it is in our time. There are many in our world who believe that Jesus will never return. That God did not send Jesus Christ to this world to die, and that God didn’t create the world and everything in it. While we can show them the truth of God’s Word, and reveal to them the evidence that we have in historical writings and in the beauty of God’s creation, some will never believe. In time the truth always comes out.

On the last day everyone will acknowledge the name of God. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord because they will see firsthand His divinity when He returns to take us to be with Him. And in that moment, there will not be time for those who deny the name of Christ here on Earth to suddenly “Change their minds”. But the truth will be revealed to them. Jesus tells us these words in Matthew 10, “Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” Jesus shares these words as comfort to us, who call upon His name and remain His children basking in his light. But it also is a reminder, that those who deny Christ’s name, and refuse His free gift of salvation, will not be given a second chance at His glorious return.

Let us this day come together as God’s children, and not fear this world and it’s persecution, or fear that Jesus will show us wrath when He returns, but let us celebrate God’s love for us. For we have been prepared. And while it won’t be easy to bear Jesus name on this Earth and we will be persecuted and ridiculed, we have the soothing and comforting words of Christ right in front of us. Do not be afraid. For He is with us. In His Word He speaks to us. In His Sacraments He provides the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. And we are His children, changed and transformed from the ways of this scary and sinful world. Let us rejoice and celebrate together that nothing can separate us from His love, and nothing can destroy the soul that will remain with God until the last day, when our bodies will be resurrected and we will go to be with Him for all eternity. That is a truth that will give us hope no matter what comes our way, and it is worth more than earthly buildings and wealth or any happiness that this sinful world can offer. It is a lasting hope that continues throughout our entire lives. May God be with us in this life, as we continue to journey on in this scary world of sin, bearing His name, and living in His light, the light that has redeemed us from the darkness of sin.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.