

Sermon for June 25th, 2023 – The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 10:24-33

Theme: Confidently Confess Christ

- 1) Understand your relationship with Christ (24-25).
- 2) Keep nothing hidden. (26-27).
- 3) Remember God's powerful providence (28-31).
- 4) Consider the pleasure Christ has when you confess him. (32-34)

²⁴“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master. If the master of the house was called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! ²⁶“So do not be afraid of them, because there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹“Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without the knowledge and consent of your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. ³²“Everyone who confesses me before others, I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.

At your confirmation, your pastor asked you: *Do you intend to continue steadfast in this [the Bible's] teaching and endure all things, even death, rather than fall away from it?* You answered: *I do, and I ask God to help me.* It's good for us to review our confirmation vows occasionally and ask ourselves: how faithful have I been to my promise?

Picture a night out with some friends. A female friend tells you that she moved in with her boyfriend. Everyone with you congratulates her. Out of concern for her soul, do you warn her against it, or do you keep quiet so as not to rain on her parade? Do your family and friends know how important Christ is to you, or do you stay silent when with them, thinking: “It's not worth the possible strain on our relationship. They know where the church is if they want to come. Besides, they probably wouldn't listen to me anyway. No, it's better to avoid confrontation!”

I don't know if you ever had such thoughts, but I confess I am guilty of keeping silent when I should have spoken. I am guilty of not confessing Christ in love because I feared “what people might think.” At my confirmation, I promised to suffer death for Jesus, but I wonder: am I willing to suffer ridicule and the loss of friends? My actions betray my heart. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!

Thankfully the Lord has been merciful to all of us. Just as He forgave Peter for his denial on the eve of Christ's crucifixion, so also the LORD forgives us when we repent. And, in the peace of that forgiveness, he encourages us to: **Confidently Confess Christ.** 1) *Understand our*

relationship with Christ. 2) Keep Nothing Hidden. 3) Remember God's powerful providence. 4) Consider the pleasure Christ has when you confess him..

Part One: Understand your relationship with Christ.

Our sermon text is part of Jesus's larger discourse with his 12 disciples before He sent them on a mission journey. Even though he was sending them to Israelites who would initially accept the Gospel joyfully, they would face great persecution in the future. Therefore, Jesus warned: *You will be hated by all people because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved.*ⁱ

Jesus explained: ²⁴*"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master.*

A disciple is defined by his relationship with his teacher: the closer the bond, the more the disciple will be associated with the teacher. So it is with us Christians: when people see us, they see Christ. Why? Because we are not only Jesus' students but also his servants whom he purchased with His holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death. He did that so we may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. We belong to Christ, as it is written: *you were set free from sin and have become slaves to God... and the final result is eternal life.*ⁱⁱ

We belong to Christ. Our hope, life – yes, our very identity is tied up in Jesus! Because this is the case: *If the master of the house was called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!*

Since we are members of Christ's household, it stands to reason that the world will treat us the same way it treated Jesus. And how was he received? Some listened and believed, but most were indifferent. Others called him *Beelzebub* – a demon lord. Some of the voices that sang his praise also called for his crucifixion. Why did that happen? Because they did not receive his message with faith.

So, should we be surprised when the people we love receive our message indifferently? Should it surprise us that people we may otherwise admire accuse us of being intolerant, unloving, and evil simply because we confess what the Bible teaches? No, it should not because that is how the world treated Jesus. Regardless, do not let the world's hostility keep you from confessing Christ. Remember who you are: his servant, disciple, and citizen of his kingdom. More than that, he adopted you to be his child and heir. Focusing on the great salvation he won for you, keep confessing Christ – keeping nothing hidden!

Part Two: Keep nothing hidden.

But that leads us to ask: what does it mean to confess Christ? Does it mean we just tell people how Jesus died on the cross for their sins but leave out the rest? I mean, many teachings in Scripture don't seem to talk about Jesus directly – many of which our world considers controversial,

intolerant, and unloving. Shouldn't we cover up unpopular teachings so people can give us a chance? Do they really need to know them if faith in Jesus is the only thing that saves them?

While it is certainly true that Christ alone saves, it is also true that every article of our faith is from Christ and for Christ. In other words, to deny or conceal any doctrine results in denying or hiding the truth Christ wants all people to know about Himself and our relationship with him. For this reason, Jesus said:

²⁶“So do not be afraid of them, because there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops.

Here is the mistake we often make when confessing Christ: we think it is up to us to convince people of the truth to save them. But that's not the reality. Our job is not to save the world – that is God's job. Our duty is simply to proclaim: to speak the truth in love.ⁱⁱⁱ

Before his ascension, Jesus commanded his followers to gather disciples of all nations. How? Baptizing them and “teaching them to keep all the instructions I have given you.”^{iv} In other words, we are not to pick and choose what articles of faith are popular or less offensive. We are to teach everything. Why? Because every article of faith is beautiful and for our good. The world can not understand this because it does not have the Holy Spirit. But God has given us his Spirit. And, as we follow the Holy Spirit's lead – subjecting our pride and reason to Christ - he reveals to us the beauty and good of everything the Bible teaches. Even though we might not understand, we believe and look forward to how God will reveal this truth at the end of time.

Part Three: Remember God's powerful providence.

Still, confessing everything God teaches in Scripture is scary – even if we do it in love! For example, you've all seen the news: how every media outlet pounced on school boards or townships that didn't actively raise the “Pride” flag this month. Won't people hate and slander us if we confess what the Bible teaches – regardless of how lovingly we do it? People can do much damage to a congregation's reputation by what they say or post on social media. Do we want to draw that kind of attention to ourselves?

Jesus says: ²⁸*Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.* Sure, people can do many horrible things to us – even going so far as to kill us, but (as St. Paul alludes to in Romans 8) they never can take away the love God has for us in Christ.^v And, in the grand scheme of things, what is our earthly life? As the apostle Paul also alludes to in Romans 8, the suffering we face on this earth is nothing compared to the everlasting glory that awaits us with Christ in paradise.^{vi}

So don't be afraid of what people might do to you. *Rather, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

God is the one we are to fear, not people. Now understand this verse correctly. Jesus is not saying: “You'd better confess Christ, or God will send you to hell.” No. Jesus is simply reminding us that

God is God. If you are going to be afraid of offending anyone, be fearful of offending him. More important, have proper reverence for him – not out of terror, but out of love. Why? Because he is our heavenly Father, who adopted us in Christ and promises to use his almighty power to watch over us as we confess Christ.

²⁹“Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without the knowledge and consent of your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

Did you notice how Jesus described God? He calls him “your Father.” *See the kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are!*^{vii} And why are we God’s children? Because he adopted us as his own through Holy Baptism – having washed all our sins away because Christ died for them.

And because God is our Father, he cares for us deeply. Just as a good earthly father would do anything to protect his family, our heavenly Father cares for us. True, he may ask us to do some difficult things, but he is always present with his watchful eye – ready to act with his almighty power when needed. Why? Because we are worth much to him. How much? The precious blood of his Son!

Part Four: Consider the pleasure Christ has when you confess him.

For this reason, Jesus continues: ³²“Everyone who confesses me before others, I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Let us understand these verses properly. Our salvation is not contingent on our confession; rather, our confession results from our faith in Jesus’ salvation. If we have received the Gospel of Christ crucified with believing hearts, this will result in our confessing Christ. And Jesus loves it when we do this – so much so that he acknowledges us before God, saying: “Look, Father, there is your dearly loved son and daughter whom I have washed clean through my sacrifice, whom you have sealed with the Holy Spirit in baptism. Look at them confessing our name, willing to suffer for our sake. Look at how they desire the salvation of the people of this world as we desire it. “*Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am so that they may see my glory—the glory you gave me because you loved me. . . I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have for me may be in them and that I may be in them.*”^{viii}

But if we disown Jesus before people and continually say we do not know Jesus or avoid speaking about him because we are afraid of people, we show that we do not have true faith in Christ. If we did, we would not continuously fear people over him. Because our continual denial would be evidence of our unbelief, Jesus would disown us before his heavenly Father. Oh, how tragic such a pronouncement would be.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Fear of the person in front of us has kept us all from confessing Christ at one point or another. Fear might be the reason you struggle to witness Christ now. May

the LORD forgive us for this. And, in the peace of his forgiveness, may His Spirit move us to Confess Christ Confidently. Consider who you are in Christ. Keep nothing hidden from the world of what God has revealed to you. Remember your heavenly Father's mighty providence. Consider the pleasure Christ has when you confess him. My sermon for you is now over. May your weekly sermon to the world, preached from the pulpit of your daily life, now begin. Amen.

ⁱ Matthew 10:22 EHV

ⁱⁱ Cf. Romans 6:22 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Ephesians 4:15

^{iv} Matthew 28:20 EHV

^v Cf. Romans 8:35-39

^{vi} Cf. Romans 8:18

^{vii} 1 John 3:1

^{viii} John 17:24, 26 EHV