

PENTECOST 3, A – June 21, 2020  
SCRIPTURES – Psalm 56; Jer. 20:7-13; Rom. 6:12-23; Matt. 10:5, 21-33

*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.*  
Matt. 10

I would like to begin this morning by reviewing what we have heard and learned from God's Word over the past six months. First of all, there is the joyous news that our God has come down to us! That is what Christmas is all about. The holy and almighty God has come down to us sinners; but, how?

- When I was a child, my brother Don and I shared a room. One night, instead of being quiet and going to sleep, as we were told, we were having a great time wrestling with each other on Don's bed. Suddenly, a large figure appeared, blocking the light from the hallway. It was our father, and he was not happy. Judgment had come!

This is not how our God has come to us. God came in humility and great lowliness to bring peace to us. ***“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men!”*** the angels sang when Jesus was born. God came in our flesh, a weak and helpless baby. He came to be our peace!

Then, a few months later we heard how Jesus, the true God who was born for us, took upon Himself our sins. He made Himself accountable for our rebellion against God and endured God's eternal judgment for this in our place. He offered His life to save our lives. Then, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day He rose from the dead. By His death and resurrection, Jesus gained forgiveness – peace with God – and a new life with God for us! He then ascended to God's right hand to rule over all creation for us and prepare a place for us in heaven. Eternal peace and joy awaits us! Nothing – no sin; no enemy; no hardship; not even death – can separate us from Him and His love!

Finally, just last week we heard of how Jesus gave all of this – His power and authority over sin and every evil, peace with God, and eternal salvation – into the hands of His apostles, simple men who are just like us. They were given authority to cast out devils, forgive sins, and heal every disease and affliction, and then were sent out to bring these blessings to others. In their preaching and Ministry Christ's kingdom, His rule over sin and Satan and every evil, was at hand. To this day Christ's kingdom continues to come to us through this Ministry. As members of ***“one holy, Christian, and apostolic Church”*** we confess that the work of Christ to forgive sin and overcome Satan continues through the Ministry of His faithful pastors to this day. In this Ministry the kingdom of heaven, God's eternal peace and rule, is truly among us. What a great blessing! So: everything will now go well for us... right?

No, it will not. Jesus warned His apostles as He sent them out, ***“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul”*** [lord of the devils], ***“how much more will***

***they malign those of his household!***” Just as Jesus was slandered and opposed, so they would be slandered and opposed.

It remains so to this day. Because you are Christ’s people, you – along with His preachers and missionaries – will be opposed. Expect this. To follow and confess Christ in and by your life is not easy. Some will call you hateful, a promoter of division and strife and not peace. Sometimes this charge will even come from other Christians.

Why? Such great blessings have been won for us by Jesus and are offered to us in His Ministry! Don’t people want this?

Yes, many do; but, our nature is to want this on our own terms, not God’s. We want to hear peace and joy and love and happiness, to be assured that all is well with us. God begins by telling us all is not well. ***“Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known,”*** Jesus says; echoing Jeremiah, who declares that God ***“sees the heart and the mind.”*** God knows the selfish desires for our own good that lie within our hearts; and so, we confess, ***“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*** We are all sinners, and this is no little thing. From our sin, our love of self more than God, comes unwillingness to listen and follow and so separation from God; from one another; and, finally, even from our own bodies in death. When it comes to who God is and the good He wants us to do, we must turn away from our own thoughts and ways and listen to Him!

Jesus is Master and we are servants; Jesus is Teacher and we are students. This is where we must begin. We must listen to Christ alone, listen to His teaching alone and not follow any other teaching, no matter how good and wise it seems. We must preach and teach His Word in its fullness. To do anything else is rebellion. And when opposed, we must say: ***“In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*** (Ps. 56:10-11)

Men can do much to you. People can berate you and hurt you and make you feel alone. They can shun you and make you feel evil. They can even harm and kill your body. 10 of those apostles Jesus called were put to death for their preaching. To this day many Christians in this world face threats to their work and income, their homes and families, and even their lives. People can kill the body... but they cannot kill or harm your soul. Jesus has already raised your soul from death and given you eternal life! He did so when He joined you to Himself in your baptism. You are of infinite value to Him. If even tiny sparrows are known by Him, so that none of them die apart from the Father’s knowledge and will, then nothing will happen to you that God is not aware of and controlling! If your witness must be in and through suffering, this is God’s will. He who brought about forgiveness and eternal life through the death of His Son will also bring life through your life.

So, listen to all of God’s Word, the words of the Bible. Believe in Jesus, the Savior it proclaims, and follow Him in everything. And, if you are spoken against and slandered for what you believe... rejoice! You are in good company.

- Jeremiah, God's prophet, spoke out against the false worship and idolatry of his people, the Jews. He was ridiculed, mocked, and threatened, even by his friends. They are all dead and gone, but he lives with God.
- Jesus was spoken against, rejected, and even put to death. But He is risen and ascended to His Father's right hand, and from there He speaks for you. ***"Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,"*** He promises.

Jesus is speaking for you. So, do not fear when the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins solely through Him brings you rejection and scorn in this world. Such preaching is the voice of Jesus, who speaks to His Father for you who believe in Him. His voice is the only one that God hears. At the final Judgment, when we all stand before God, no voice will be raised against you. There will be no slander, no whispered threats. Only Jesus will be heard, and you will have nothing to fear. So: ***"Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers."*** (Jer. 20:13) In the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.