

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

July 17, 2011

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Matthew 10:24-33

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! "So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. (NIV)

The disciple Stephen boldly stood before the high council and confessed the truth to the Sanhedrin. He proclaimed before them all that Jesus, the one they rejected, is the Christ. For speaking this truth, Stephen was dragged outside the city where they threw large stones on him until he was dead. ***"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master."***

In 1521, a man named Martin Luther stood trial at the Diet of Worms for confessing the truth that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus alone apart from any works of the law. When ordered to recant his teachings, and threatened to be declared a heretic and an outlaw whose life could be taken at any time, Luther replied with those famous words: *Unless I am convinced by the teachings of the Holy Scriptures...I am tied by the Scriptures and by my conscience. I cannot and will not recant anything...Here I stand. God help me! Amen.* Nine years later in 1530, a group of Lutheran princes signed & presented a document knowing full well it could mean their deaths. Yet, they wanted to proclaim clearly the truths written down in that Augsburg Confession because what was at stake was the Word of God. ***"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."***

The list of names could go on and on and on of those who have taken a stand for God's truth, those who openly confessed Christ as Savior, and have faced persecution and danger because of it. Make no mistake there has been much blood spilled to the ground by martyrs for Jesus. Yet, each one that fell had a God who says about the cheap little sparrows ***"not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father...So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."***

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is now our time! It is now our turn! It is time for us to proclaim boldly to the world Jesus as Lord. It is our turn to look for

opportunities and openings to tell others how Jesus became our Savior. It is our time and our turn to let everyone know Jesus is our priceless treasure! Listen to our Savior's Word and encouragement this morning. **Don't be afraid. Confess Christ!**

Isn't one of the biggest obstacles of sharing our faith and confessing Jesus to others fear? We are afraid of what others might think of us, afraid of what they might say to us, maybe even afraid of what others might do to us? Perhaps this is why three times in these verses Jesus says: "***Do not be afraid.***" We might even translate Jesus' words to say: "*Don't ever begin to be afraid of them.*" Why does Jesus tell us not to fear? Is it because people will always react well when we speak God's Word? Will others always be happy to hear about sin and about the only Savior from sin? Not exactly. Jesus actually tells us the opposite. "***A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!***"

Think of how Jesus was treated as He preached the good news. Recall the different reactions as Jesus taught God's Word. Some could not stand to hear it. They hated the message and they hated Jesus because of it. Should we expect less? Why would we be above Jesus? Does a student get treated with more respect than his teacher? Should a servant expect to get more preferential treatment than his master? That's not how it works. Instead, it is an honor to just be like the teacher, and an honor to be treated like the master. Jesus was called Beelzebub, meaning "*lord of flies,*" referring to the flies on manure. It was a negative term used by some Jews for the false god Baal as a way of saying Baal was lord over only flies in a manure pile. This term also became a name for Satan himself. If they called Jesus a devil, the lord only of flies, what will they call the members of his household? So Jesus tells us right up front - as we confess Him as Christ, people will not always like it. People will not always like us.

One of the accounts in the Bible I find amazing is in Acts where the apostles were arrested and then they were beaten. In fact, they were flogged and before they were let go they were ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus any more. Then we read these next two verses: "***The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ***" (Acts 5). "*Don't ever begin to be afraid of them.*"

Don't be afraid. Confess Christ! Jesus tells us: "***There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.***" Elsewhere Jesus says we are not to take a light and cover it with a bowl. Confess Jesus as Savior. Let the world know what Jesus did for you, what Jesus means to you. Go with God's Word and proclaim it. Go without fear. Jesus put things into perspective for his disciples. "***Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.***" What is the worst an enemy of Jesus can do to you? An enemy could kill your body, but can't ever touch your soul. The worst the enemy can do is take away your earthly life, but an enemy can't do a thing to take away our eternal life. Some enemies have been able to temporarily separate

God's people from their families, but they can never succeed at separating us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Don't be afraid. Confess Christ!

Jesus leaves us with one more reason we don't have to be afraid. "***Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.***" Jesus uses an argument from the lesser to the greater. God even cares about the lesser things - a sparrow which you could buy for half a cent. God knows when every single sparrow falls to the ground. And who would ever care enough to count the number of hairs on a person's head? God has them all numbered! If God takes such care of the little things like that - how much more is He going to care for you - you who "***are worth more than many sparrows?***" Paul makes the same argument about God's love and care for us, but He does the opposite by going from the greatest to the lesser when he writes: "***If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?***" (Romans 8) So do not be afraid. Confess Christ.

I have been blessed in the fact that I have never had to chose between confessing Christ and giving up my life. I've never had my livelihood, my family, or myself threatened for believing in Jesus. But I am also sad to say that I have faltered under pressures far less. I have failed to confess Christ every time I wanted to fit into the world so I wouldn't stick out. I missed probably too many opportunities and openings to count, where I could have spoken God's truth, but didn't. I have not always rejoiced even in little insults and suffering for the Name. I have feared others at times more than my God who is the only one who holds the keys to eternal life and death. My words and life do not always make a clear bold confession. If you take an honest and true look at yourselves I'm sure you would have to confess right along with me that we do not deserve to have Jesus acknowledge us. We deserve to be disowned by our God.

But once again that is what makes Jesus who He is - my Substitute - my Savior, who always boldly, faithfully, and truthfully confessed Himself to be the Christ saying : "*I Am.*" Jesus confessed this truth even though it would lead Him to His death, a death He willingly died on a cross for my sins, and not only for mine but for the sins of the whole world. On the cross Jesus endured the torture not just of body, but of soul to save our souls. Now this Christ, this Savior of mine, after defeating death and leaving His grave behind, promises to acknowledge me before the Father. He promises to acknowledge all who believe in Him with their hearts and confess with their mouths that He is our Lord. So when I close my eyes to sleep, and one day when my eyes close in death, I do not have to be afraid. Don't even begin to be afraid of them. How could we do anything other than confess Christ?

Do you know how the word Christian came about? Actually, it came from the enemies of Jesus' church. They saw the followers of Jesus and they said they are just a bunch of little Christs - Christians. And do you know what the followers of Jesus did? They wore that name like a badge of honor! You want to call us little Christs - Christians, well then thank you very much. Dear friends, it is now our time. It is now our turn. You have nothing to be afraid of because your Savior has made sure of it. Confidently confess Christ. Amen.

