

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON**

**Third Sunday After Pentecost**

**June 21, 2020**

### **Psalm 91:1–10**

#### **My Refuge and My Fortress**

- 91** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 2** I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust.”
- 3** For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4** He will cover you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
- 5** You will not fear the terror of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
**6** nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- 7** A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.
- 8** You will only look with your eyes  
and see the recompense of the wicked.
- 9** Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—  
the Most High, who is my refuge—  
**10** no evil shall be allowed to befall you,  
no plague come near your tent.

### **OLD TESTAMENT READING**

#### **Jeremiah 20:7-13 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> O LORD, you have deceived me,  
and I was deceived;  
you are stronger than I,  
and you have prevailed.  
I have become a laughingstock all the day;

everyone mocks me.

<sup>8</sup> For whenever I speak, I cry out,  
I shout, "Violence and destruction!"  
For the word of the LORD has become for me  
a reproach and derision all day long.

<sup>9</sup> If I say, "I will not mention him,  
or speak any more in his name,"  
there is in my heart as it were a burning fire  
shut up in my bones,  
and I am weary with holding it in,  
and I cannot.

<sup>10</sup> For I hear many whispering.  
Terror is on every side!  
"Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"  
say all my close friends,  
watching for my fall.

"Perhaps he will be deceived;  
then we can overcome him  
and take our revenge on him."

<sup>11</sup> But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior;  
therefore my persecutors will stumble;  
they will not overcome me.  
They will be greatly shamed,  
for they will not succeed.

Their eternal dishonor  
will never be forgotten.

<sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous,  
who sees the heart and the mind  
let me see your vengeance upon them,  
for to you have I committed my cause.

<sup>13</sup> Sing to the LORD;  
praise the LORD!  
For he has delivered the life of the needy  
from the hand of evildoers.

### **EPISTLE: Romans 6:12-23 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

<sup>15</sup> What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

<sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## **HOLY GOSPEL**

### **Matthew 10:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans,

### **Matthew 10:21-33 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, <sup>22</sup> and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup> When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

<sup>24</sup> “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. <sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup> So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, <sup>33</sup> but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

## Sermon 24 – Third Sunday after Pentecost

### “And They Shall Know No Fear”

#### Matthew 10:21-33

Dear friends,

Jesus in our Gospel lesson talks about fear, persecution, and how none of this is beyond us, but it is, because these are not things we experience on a daily basis. The fear, maybe, but fear is a weird emotion, one not thrust upon us but opted into by us, often driven by upbringing or instinct. My point is, Jesus is talking about a phase the disciples go through, but in our day-to-day you and I do not. Discipleship in Christ has changed over the years, over the thousands of years. What does that mean for this passage? What are we supposed to learn here?

Remember that Jesus is setting the tune for the disciples. He is sending them out for fieldwork, and he's trying to get their expectations and their delivery right from the get go. Jesus has taught them for a while now, and now He wants them to go out and do some work themselves. So this is scene-setting. **“21 Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, 22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”** Again, Jesus is specific. He's saying that, from the disciples' teaching, brother will deliver brother, father will lift his hand against son, etc. This happened to the disciples, absolutely, and it does happen today, absolutely. Christianity causes all sorts of problems for sinful human beings, it often magnifies their sin. Luther once wrote a whole book on the seemingly illogical observation that when God's Word is preached well, human beings don't get any better, they get worse. Again, that's illogical, but it follows precisely the illogic of the human soul. Tell a precocious child do not ever do this thing, and suddenly that child really really wants to do the thing. What is forbidden to us is alluring to us. Sin makes us want what we cannot have, makes us hate being told thou shalt not, and we respond to discipline often by fighting back.

The mark of the repentant sinner, as I said last week, is that he knows this and hates this about himself and wants to be forgiven for it. Repentance is the key, rather than success or force. But that's not what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is telling the disciples that people are

going to find their teaching blasphemously offensive, and are going to respond violently to them and the disciples they create.

We do not endure that violence, you and I. Nobody is trying to kill us for believing what we believe. We do suffer estrangement from friends and family, and that does hurt, but its not like laying your life on the line. So these words of Jesus are hard for you and I to process in an honest way. What is Jesus saying to us? Persecution comes when it comes, we shouldn't assume its there when its not, and we shouldn't seek it out, that's kind of weird.

Like I said, look at this as an issue of being a disciple. Being Jesus' disciple has changed in the way it looks, in the way it feels, but the essence of it remains blessedly unchanged. **“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 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.”** Again, ignore the specifics. Focus on the first part. Nobody is calling you a child of the devil, if they are, I'm sorry, I didn't know, come to me and we'll talk about that. But, I'm assuming that people aren't calling you devilish on a regular basis because you believe in Jesus. But Jesus isn't requiring that for discipleship. He's not telling you, “Get persecuted or go home.” Look at the first part. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. Let those words be your guide.

We are all trying to be like Jesus. That is why we gather around His Word, that is why we eat and drink His Supper. That is why we encourage one another. We are all trying to echo Jesus' holiness, His compassion, and walk in His way. I submit to you that this is what Jesus would have us, His disciples who remain largely unpersecuted, do. He wants to be like Him. If you're anything like me, your answer to this is “hey, I'm trying!” And that's why we're here. In our efforts to be more like Jesus, to let Jesus shine from us, we tune ourselves to that truest part of our identity. That is to say, Jesus has made us holy. We're just working to make that holiness come out rather than the sinner.

Jesus goes on. 26 **“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.”** There is another aspect of discipleship. We proclaim. This we do. We do it by gathering, we do it by speaking, we do it by taking Communion. It's hard to speak when most of your friends and family are some form of

Christian, and it's even harder when you don't know how to say how important this all is to you. But you can pray, you can love, and you can speak. All of this you can do.

Jesus then discusses fear. **“28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”** Telling someone not to be afraid isn't very productive usually, but Jesus is telling you why you need fear no evil. God has the power over body and soul, God has the power over our destiny as he continually reminds us. Jesus is here as your Savior, but also as your Shepherd and Guide. He is here for you right now to maintain both your body and your soul. Jesus' word is a threat, don't get me wrong, but that threat works both ways, just like God's power works both ways. God doesn't want to kill either your body or soul in hell for eternity, He doesn't want anyone to suffer that fate. He wants to save and love, and He offers you both in His son Jesus. Fear God's power, sure, but thanks to Jesus, you don't have to assume that God's power is out to get you. Quite the opposite. You can assume that God's power is there to save you, to preserve your body and your soul. That's why He throws in that seemingly random phrase about being worth more than many sparrows.

So what do you fear? I don't think we fear men, but we do fear uselessness, extinction of purpose. We want to know that this church will mean something for the future, and that is something God does not assure us here. God assures us rather that our testimony is what He needs it to be, that He will use it as He sees fit. That's no guarantee of success, it's a guarantee that God makes our work, our love, and our discipleship His priority, His concern, but ultimately His business, and not ours. That's odd to have the work that our hands are doing out of our hands, like working in the dark without seeing the result. But remember, God isn't refusing to tell you then judging you on the basis of that. Hardly. God knows you don't know how it will turn out, and He will love you through that darkness, through that ignorance. God is not a builder withholding the architectural plans from His workers then expecting wonderful results. God is the master, He is the builder, He is the material, and He is the result. Think about that.

What is true for our church is true for our world and our lives. Jesus promises difficulty, adversity, and all sorts of fairly horrid obstacles on the way to our true glory. He doesn't promise to snowball them out of the way. He does promise to help us get through them, though how that help comes about often isn't to our liking. To be a disciple of Jesus is to follow Jesus, and as incredibly simple as that statement is to say, figuring out what that means on a day-by-day, decision-by-decision basis is far from simple. Do remember that the key element of following is, in the end, moving forward. One foot at a time. Whatever else you do as you walk, keep walking. With Jesus. He's here to keep you with Him. He's there, leading ahead. You can't see Him, but you do hear Him. He tells you that you are worth more to Him than all creation. He tells you that you will encounter problems along the way. He tells you that those problems do not mean that He has left you, or doesn't love you. He tells you that you are a sinner and apt to stray, to follow something, *anything* else but Him. He also tells you that despite all of that, He keeps leading the way.

Amen.