

“Dare to Preach the Truth”

Dr. Luther writes: “So it goes everywhere even now. Now that the end of the world is approaching, the people rage and rave most horribly against God. They blaspheme and damn God’s word, though they well know that it is God’s word and truth. Besides so many fearful signs and wonders are appearing, both in the heavens and among all creatures, which threaten them terribly. It is indeed a wicked and miserable time, even worse than that of Jeremiah.” (AE 35:279-282).

The Lord called Jeremiah to preach destruction to those who thought they were in God’s good graces. He dared to preach “against this city” – saying that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of their sinful rebellion against the Lord. God’s people had turned away from Him – they mixed the one true faith with false beliefs in false gods. So the Lord sends Jeremiah to call them to repentance.

“Mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the Lord your God,” he proclaimed. These folks were doomed to destruction if they continued in their ways – and it is out of love that the Lord calls them to repent, to turn, to listen to the voice of the one true God – so that they might live.

Jesus dared to preach a “lament” over Jerusalem – over God’s chosen people Israel. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken.”

The last thing Jesus wants is their destruction. He isn’t preaching just to prove He is right – to show that He is “holier-than-thou” (although, both are true). This is a matter of life and death!

Jesus dares to call them to repentance because He loves them. He desires to gather them, not scatter them – to protect them, not leave them helpless and defenseless. He desires to save them – but they would not! So He “laments” that they are on the path to destruction – to eternal death, forever separated from the Lord their God.

As you can see, preaching the truth is risky business. Dare to preach in the face of climate change that the Lord God controls the heavens and the earth – dare to preach that abortion is murder, the killing of a human being – dare to preach that transgenderism is a confusion and deception propagated by the devil to obscure the goodness of being created male and female – dare to preach that there is only one way of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, and all others are damned – and the adamant response is – “Death to the preacher!”

How dare anyone speak against our religion – question our faith – say that our beliefs are false? To say that someone’s chosen “way” leads to death – is to put one’s own life on the line.

Whether in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, Jesus the Savior, or the world in which we live today – Christ and His Church have always been at odds with the Civil Religion of the day. Why is that? It all comes down to the truth.

Christ and His Church dare to speak an objective word of truth to the world – a melting pot where all religions are given equal status – a spiritual buffet table where people can pick and choose whatever beliefs they want – and it’s all good, they say, because all gods and each tailor fit spirituality leads to heaven.

And therein lies the problem – because not all religions are true, and good, and saving. There is but “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.” That’s why the one true God dares to command – “You shall have no other gods.”

While our society can tolerate all kinds of teachings and beliefs – it does not tolerate the absolute truths of Christianity. Christianity dares to preach that Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and every other religion are false – that their gods are a nothing, and their worship is empty.

And it doesn’t matter how devoted their followers are – it doesn’t matter how “good” their words and deeds appear to be – their teachings are lies. Rather than tolerate such false beliefs, rather than let them continue in their false spirituality – Christianity dares to speak the truth – because if they continue in their ways and do not repent – they will be forsaken, it will lead to their destruction, they will die eternally.

The world in which we live is repulsed by the objective truth that Christianity preaches. In a world that preaches tolerance and diversity and defines “love” as being nice and getting along – Christianity doesn’t play nice, because in true love, such false hopes cannot go unchallenged.

Christians belong to Christ – they follow His voice and believe His words. Jesus says: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (John 14:6 and Acts 4:12)

Do you believe what God says in these verses? If not, then you also need to repent. But if you do, then the only loving thing to do is to make sure that this is the message which Christ’s Church preaches to the world. For there IS no other salvation – it is exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ – and the Good News is that this Christ and this salvation are for ALL people!

The Apostle Paul begs us to “join in imitating” him – to “stand firm” in the Lord. The day may come when such preachers are jailed, or even killed – after all, that’s what they did to all the prophets of the truth who have come before us. To preach such truth might mean that this congregation will be put to death as people flee to a more “tolerant” environment.

Dearly beloved, let us repent of our tolerance of false teaching – of failing to love our neighbor by speaking up and warning them so that they are not led astray. Let us pray for all enemies of the Gospel – that by the faithful preaching of Christ’s Church – all hearts may be turned so that they trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Dearly beloved, Christ gathers you to Himself and His salvation under the wings of His Church – preaching to you, saying, “I forgive you all your sins” – and His forgiveness gives you life, eternal life.

Stand firm – hearing His Word, receiving His Sacraments, and living in and from His forgiveness – even as His Church preaches that forgiveness to the ends of the world – for the life of the world. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.