

“Fear and Love God”

Martin Luther was attacked by church and state because he dared to preach and teach the Word of the Lord. For him there was, no doubt, fear in the face of such intimidation – and yet, he would not be deterred – because he couldn’t imagine standing before the Lord on Judgment day and hearing Him say – “Why were you more afraid of them, than me? Indeed, we are to FEAR, love and trust in God above ALL things.

Jesus sent out the Twelve to proclaim that “the kingdom of heaven is near” – and He worked miracles and wonders through these men – but everything was not wonderful for them. They faced heavy opposition, were intimidated, and rejected – sometimes by households, whole towns, even family and friends.

But, “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” Persecution for preaching the Word of God was no excuse to remain silent. Intimidation was no excuse for shrinking back – or changing the message they were given to preach.

“Have no fear of them,” Jesus says – “for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. It may look like the enemies have the upper hand – but Jesus had ALREADY told them that He would win the victory – that He would return in glory to judge all nations and to condemn those who reject Him, and His Word.

Jesus gets even more specific. “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.”

Yes, the disciples will suffer at the hands of sinners – but those evildoers can ONLY kill the body. God the Father almighty, wields a much bigger sword – for He can destroy BOTH body and soul by sending them to hell for eternity.

That brings us back to Luther’s fear – of standing before the judgment seat of God and hearing – “Why were you more afraid of them, than of Me?” That is a question confronting the Church today. The Lord has called the Church to proclaim His message – both His Law in all its severity – and His Gospel in all its sweetness.

You are His Church – and as a baptized child of God, you too will face such persecution and intimidation. When doing the right thing in God’s eye means suffering – you will be tempted to take the easy way out.

When a family member, or friend, chooses a sinful way of life – will you tell them God is not pleased with them and risk a hostile reaction – or keep silent in order to preserve the peace?

Whether at school or work – you are constantly faced with intimidation, and fear – tempted to turn from what is good and pure and holy, to what is unholy.

Congregations are intimidated as well – to alter the message in order to “survive” – to fear empty pews more than God, and to stop condemning sin, all in the name of being more loving. You know the rationale given – empty pews mean empty offering plates, and offerings pay the bills, and paid bills means the congregation live to face another day.

The temptation is to become disciples of the world and preach its message. “Ease up on the Law – stop denouncing immorality as evil – conduct further studies in order to redefine sin. Give up disciplining sinners – warning them that their sin is deadly – cutting them off from Christ and His salvation, and landing them in hell.”

The world’s message is very deceiving. Bear with people, accept their sinful desires and deeds – don’t offend them with God’s Word of truth or you will push them away, and then they will never hear the Word.

Did you hear what the world is saying? The world, in essence – wants you to stop speaking God’s Word to sinners – or else sinners will not hear God’s Word. That makes no sense!

Don’t speak God’s Word of Law that condemns the sinner and puts him to death – only preach God’s Law as a helpful tool for living. Well, if the sinner is not convicted of his sin – then he has no need for the “not guilty for Jesus’ sake” of the Gospel. If the sinner is not put to death – the new man cannot be resurrected by the Gospel to live a new life with Christ now in this life, and with Him for all eternity.

Again, the question – “Why were you more afraid of them, than Me?” How sad it is when we fear man more than God – because He clearly says, “do not be afraid.”

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” When Jesus sends out the Twelve – He’s not like some selfish ruler who demands His servants suffer so He doesn’t have to – He doesn’t send them to die so that He can preserve His own life. No, He says they will suffer as He suffers – but the Master is greater than the servant – and His suffering is greater as well (far greater).

For the Twelve, and for you, the Master Jesus suffered at the hands of evil men. The Innocent One is accused of the sins of which you are guilty. He suffers hell for all of us sinners who are deserving of hell. He gives His life for us who wallow in sin and death.

Sparrows may be purchased for pennies – but your Father in heaven has given His innocent Son into death, to shed His holy precious blood – to redeem you, for you are precious to Him.

“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.”

To live in fear of the world and deny our sin is to remain in death with hell to pay. To live in fear of an UN-forgiving God is to deny the forgiveness won for you by Christ’s death of the cross. To live in impenitence is to reject the Father’s gift of salvation, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

To trust in the One who has rescued your body and soul from eternal death – is to acknowledge Jesus as the Savior of the world. To confess your sins, and come before the Lord with penitent hearts – not fearing His wrath, but trusting His mercy – to eat and drink His Body and Blood “for the forgiveness of all your sin” – is to confess that the Father’s wrath has been turned away – and to acknowledge His enduring love for you.

“So have no fear” – of man, of sin, of death, or of hell – for God’s love, shown to you in Christ Jesus, is greater than all. Amen.

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