

“Precious Words”

Previously in St. Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus had asked His disciples – “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter, stepping forward, confessed what had been revealed to him by God the Father in heaven. “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Oh, how quickly things change. From the great confession of St. Peter – to the scolding words of Jesus, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of man.”

Peter was right in confessing Jesus to be “the Christ” – but when Jesus tells His disciples what it means for Him to be “the Christ” – Peter tried to put a stop to it. Suffering? Put to death? No way – that’s not way to be “the Christ.”

But Peter has it all wrong. He does not have in mind the things of God. His attempt to keep Jesus from going to the cross to suffer and die for the salvation of the world – is – satanic.

So, Jesus puts him in his place. If you are going to be my disciple, Peter – you need to quite trying to lead – get in line, and follow me. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Suffering, death – denial of self – a cross – that’s what comes with following Jesus. Just ask Jeremiah the prophet. Just ask the Apostle Paul.

A Christian lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord – and as a result – he will be persecuted, cursed, left out of the revelry of the world. As the Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah – so the Christian, regardless of the circumstances – is to “utter what is precious, and not what is worthless.”

In so doing, you will be like a “fortified wall of bronze” – these people “will fight against you” – but they “shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you.” That was the Lord’s promise to Jeremiah – and that is His promise to you as well.

As you well know, Christianity and the world always seem to be butting heads – but have you noticed that it is over the basic, foundational, things of life? Christianity views every life as sacred, precious – because it was created by God – and therefore, is to be loved, nourished, and protected.

So, Christians “utter what is precious” – that abortion, suicide (even with the assistance of a medical professional) – is wrong. It’s sinful to harm our neighbor, and to take a life. The justification put forth by the world for such things are “worthless words” (to use the language from Jeremiah 15).

When Christians speak God’s truth in these matters, you can be sure that the world will rebel, attack, and despise you for it. So, listen to Jesus. “Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

Another area of great tension between Christianity and the world is in the area of sexuality. Again, a very basic, foundational part of life. The world has ripped the understanding of sexuality away from the One who created us to be male and female in the first place.

God says that sexual relations are to take place between one man and one woman – and not just any man and woman – but rather, those who have been united as husband and wife. Churches used to speak out against living together and sex outside of marriage – calling sin a sin – but now, sadly, most churches have given up fighting that battle, choosing to look the other way.

“Worthless” words are expected from the world, but they can come from the church as well. When Christians do not hold up marriage as a holy gift of God – when they begin to walk in the ways of the world – then they are no longer “a fortified wall of bronze” to defend our neighbor, and to be a source of blessing for the world.

More recently, other aspects of sexuality have entered the mainstream of society. Homosexuality is legalized, and few dare to speak against it. Gender confusion has taken hold – but what can one expect when God’s created order is replaced by the individual’s self-proclaimed-identity? It’s no wonder our society is in chaos – especially our young people who have not been taught to appreciate God’s good creation.

Speak “precious words” regarding sexuality – and the “worthless words” of society may come in the form of being labeled a hater, or lawsuits, or some other type of persecution. Listen to Jesus. “Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

Once man has become the final arbiter of truth with regards to life and sexuality – it’s no surprise that this carries over to all other areas of life. Rather than God and His Word being the objective truth – subjective truth reigns – with every individual left to decide for himself what is true, and what is not.

Are you shocked by the riots in the streets? Anarchy is what happens when one lives as if he has no one to rule over him. If God is removed from the picture, from my life and my world – then I am the king who can do as I please – no matter who gets hurt, or what is destroyed?

Dearly beloved, the world is full of “worthless words” – and is in desperate need of the “precious words” of God. That is why you are given to speak His Word – where you live – in your family, in your homes, and in society.

Yes, you will suffer for speaking God’s “precious words” – you will be left out, rejected, despised. That is the cross the Christian bears – but just as Christ bore the cross for the sake of the whole world – these precious words are for your salvation, and theirs!

Husband and wives, speak “precious words” to one another. Parents, speak them to your children. Citizens, speak the “precious words” of God to your leaders and fellow citizens – so that they may be blessed – led in the way of the Lord, the way of peace, the way of salvation.

But first, listen. Listen to the “precious words” your Savior speaks to you. “I am with you to save you and deliver you.” Your Savior is here today, speaking to you, giving you His gifts – that you may be defended, strengthened, and led by His gracious forgiveness – even in the way that leads unto life everlasting. Amen.

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