

Midweek Lenten Vespers #5  
St. Matthew 10:32-42  
April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Will I Also Confess Before My Father

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Sermon Text:**

“Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, in the Gospel reading from this past Sunday after the Lord + Jesus preached to them the truth; after He preached against their denial of the resurrection of the dead, and of the reward of eternal life, they picked up stones to throw at Him. This is the response of all those who are so thoroughly refuted by the truth that they have no more words with which to argue. When they have no more words, they resort to violence. This is certainly the way it is today in our society. There are those who have lost the ability to argue with sound arguments and reason, those whose position has been made so untenable that they resort to violence.

This past Sunday's Gospel showed our Lord + Jesus being the recipient of this violence. Today, our Lord prepares us to receive the violence shown to Him. He tells us to take up our cross and follow after Him. Now, my dear friends, when we hear this, we imagine a cross being that of trouble and sorrow. And it certainly can be that type of a cross. We can bear a cross where we are hated and ridiculed for what we believe, teach, and confess. But let us examine what a cross is. The cross is the instrument of crucifixion. Our Lord is here preparing His Apostles for His eventual crucifixion by these words. We who live after our Lord's Passion can envision our Lord upon the tree of the holy cross. We can see His suffering and crucifixion—His death for us—simply by looking at all the crucifixes adorning our sanctuary. This is the cross with which our Lord + Jesus tells us to take up and follow after Him.

Those who committed crimes worthy of death—worthy of the death penalty—were crucified upon a tree. Their crucifixion was not just about trouble and sorrow, even though they certainly endured trouble and sorrow upon their trees. Their crucifixion was a death sentence. They were crucified until they were dead. This is what our Lord endured for us. He was sentenced to the death penalty, but He committed *no* crime let alone one worthy of death. He bore our sentence of death. We are the ones who are worthy of death on account of our manifold sins and trespasses. We go free. He carries our cross to His death, and makes atonement for all our sins and trespasses. Therefore, when our Lord + Jesus tells us to take up our cross and follow after Him, He is referring the cross which He bore on our

behalf. We are to take up the cross of our atonement and follow after Him.

For those of us who cling in faith to the hope of eternal life, we do this gladly and willingly. We forsake the things of this life and world, in exchange for the better things of the world to come. We cling to these promises because we believe them to be the truth. We will gladly endure trouble and sorrow. We will willingly endure pain and shame; will gladly take up our cross and follow after the Lord + Jesus in faith, because He has the words of eternal life. He preaches the truth, and we cling in faith to that truth.

But just as our Lord + Jesus was mocked and ridiculed by those who could not abide the truth, we will also endure mockery and shame from this world. They picked up stones to throw at Him. They will also pick up stones to throw at us. This is why our Lord + Jesus tells us that He did not come to send peace upon the earth. He came to send a sword. This is what the Word of the Truth does, it cuts away at all that is false and in error. It cuts away falsehood, and destroys all those who lie about the Word of the Lord God. Those false teachers that have the sword of truth cast into their hearts do not take it very well. They lash out in hatred and violence. They lash out at us.

This is easy for us to combat when we think that these attacks are going to be coming from some nameless antagonist. For example, it is easy for us to say we will not be ashamed of the cross when we are only viewing the attack from the Jews in the Gospel readings. They are far away. They are long dead. They are not people we deal with on an everyday basis. So, it is easy for us to say that we will take up our cross and follow after the Lord + Jesus when we are considering these individuals to be the one doling out the shame and ridicule.

This is why our Lord in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew makes this confrontation more personal for us. It is easy for us to remain steadfast when the attacks are out there somewhere in the world. We can easily separate ourselves from such pain and torment. We can even remain steadfast when the attacks are up close and personal and done by those with which we do not get along. We can easily dismiss the haters when they are in someone else's house. But what about when that hate is directed at us by those of our own household? This is where most people are challenged in their steadfast faithfulness to the Lord + Jesus. It is the attack from those we love the most which challenges us to continue to boldly confess the Lord + Jesus before man.

A man will be set a variance with his own father. A daughter will be at variance with her mother. A daughter-in-law will be set at variance with her mother-in-law. This is where the devil wields his greatest power against us by using our own family against us. For in the case of dissensions within the family the usual policy is for compromise. This is usually done out of necessity, so that peace may be maintained within the household. Compromise can often mean that faithfulness in the Lord + Jesus is diminished. This amounts to a denial of the Lord + Jesus. This is why our Lord states that those who deny Him before man, will deny Him before His Father in Heaven.

But He also promises that those who remain steadfast in their faithfulness, who faithfully take up their cross and follow after Him, He will confess before His Father in Heaven. Our names will be written in the Book of Life, and no one will be able to erase them from it. I know that this is true about all those who are gathered here for each of us have already shown such steadfast faithfulness by being the only ones in our families who diligently seek the truth and cling to it. We have no large families in this parish. Everyone has come as either a single person or a couple at most. Therefore, these words of our Lord to remain steadfast as we carry our cross and follow after Him, we are already doing. But let us take heed, my dear little children, that we continue to remain steadfast even when we face opposition from our own families. For the devil will continue to use them against us. Even as we continue to use the sword of the truth of the Word of God to cut away the falsehood that keeps them out of the true faith in which we live and breathe. The truth will divide the devil's kingdom. Therefore, until the devil's kingdom

is thoroughly put down by the truth, there can be no peace.

This is another thing which we must guard against. For there is true peace and there is false peace. There is true love and false love. There is true joy and false joy. False peace is that peace where the truth of the Word of the Lord God has been compromised for the sake of argument. True peace exists where the Word of God shines forth in its truth and purity so that all falsehood is done away with. The same is true of false love—the love of the world—where a person does not speak against someone’s evil and bad behavior because that person believes it is the “loving thing to do.” No, my dear friends, true love speaks the truth in love. It does not shy away from the Law. It is the loving thing to do to preach the Law so that hearts may be converted, and the person be turned away from the path of eternal destruction which they are on. False joy is like the first two. For joy that only exists because a person has avoided the battle, and the cross is no true joy. Only when the battle has been won, only when the enemy has been thoroughly defeated can there be true joy.

These things are hard to do when the opposition to the truth, to love, and to joy come from the ones we love the most. This is why our Lord + Jesus has one more word to give to us. We must deny even our own life. Our life in this world means nothing if it does not lead to the everlasting life in Heaven. We can possess all the good things this earthly life has to offer, but we will really have nothing, for all these things will pass away. The truth of the Word of the Lord God will never pass away. It will carry us into our eternal life in Heaven.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us take up our cross and follow after the Lord + Jesus. For He has the words of eternal life. Just as there were those who picked up stones to throw at Him, just as He was crucified upon the tree of the holy cross, we can also expect to endure stones and a cross. But we can cling steadfast in faith to our Lord + Jesus because He has already defeated our true enemies. He has defeated sin, death, and the devil. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh may cast stones, but they cannot truly hurt us. For our Lord has suffered upon the tree of the holy cross to atone for all of our sins, and has opened up the gates of Heaven by His resurrection from the dead. These are our rewards that He grants to us on account of the faith He has implanted in us. He will also confess our names before the heavenly Father stating that we are His brothers and sisters, we have inherited eternal life with Him and all the saints and angels, because we have remained steadfast in faith towards Him. Let us continue steadfast in the Apostles’ doctrine and in faith until He calls us out of this evil world to our eternal home in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

#### **Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

#### **The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ + Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*