



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 30, 2011

1st Sunday of Endtime: Reformation

Sermon Text: [Matthew 10:16-23](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 46](#)

Second Lesson: [2 Timothy 4:9-18](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 10:16-23](#)

Reformation Work Continues

Among Wolves

By Faithful Witnesses

You get to hear cool trumpets, sing a neat song, and then you have to listen to God tell you “All men will hate you because of me.” That’s a real let down and a downer, isn’t it? Things are going along just fine and then Jesus has to come and tell us “Guess what? Things aren’t always going to go smoothly and wonderfully. You live in a sinful world, and people are going to hate you.” It doesn’t really sound like the latest and greatest motivational speaker, does it? It really shouldn’t surprise us though.

Our God throughout the Bible lays it out for us straightforward and to the point and tells us the wonderful blessings he’s given us. He also tells us, with those blessings, and as we live for him, there will be those that attack us. It kind of fits in with what we talked about last week, the last week of our stewardship emphasis, looking at the gift of leadership. We talked about being a leader on a lot of reality shows and how that puts a target on your back and how at times it makes it tough. As we come together and celebrate the Reformation, we see that being a Christian leader and leading people to God’s Word at times very much puts a target on your back.

Pretty soon I’m guessing a lot of you are probably going to try to kill Bambi’s dad, right? There’s not really a target on it, but that’s the target you are going to be aiming at, right? On May 25, 1521, a target was put on Martin Luther’s back. After the Diet of Worms, he was called before this Diet, before the Emperor Charles and was told to recant everything he had written...his teaching that we are saved by faith alone, we are saved by God’s grace alone, and that Scripture alone is the ultimate authority. He was told “We don’t want to debate it anymore. You have to recant. You have to say that everything you have written is wrong.” Luther said, “Give me a day. Give me a day to think about it.” He came back the next day and said, “Here I stand. I can do no other. Unless you can show me from Scripture that I am wrong, I cannot and I will not recant. I can’t go against what God’s Word has said.”

So the edict was given that Luther was under the Emperor’s ban. What that meant is that there was a very real target on his back. If you lent Luther aid, as in food or water, you could be punished for that. And if you found Martin Luther, you could kill him without any legal repercussions because he was under the Emperor’s ban.

So when we see Jesus talking about “You’ll be handed over before kings and councils to make our good confession;” we saw it with Daniel in our First Lesson, and we saw it with Paul in our Second Lesson, and as we celebrate the Reformation, one of the things we remember is what Luther was willing to do because he believed the truth of God’s Word and how he was willing to stand before these people and say what he believed was right on the basis of God’s Word.

As we consider these words that our Savior spoke, we see how it fits for all those people, but how does it fit for us? That’s really what we want to think about today. How does this Reformation work continue today? You and I more than likely aren’t going to be threatened with an imperial ban and be put to death because of what we teach and believe. But what do we put on the line? What do we say that we love God more than we love “this” as we continue this Reformation work our God has called us to?

One thing that is true is just like when Jesus sent out the Twelve Apostles to go out through all the cities and towns, there would be people that would oppose them. He lays that out quite clearly. “People are going to hand you over to councils.” The councils would be the Jewish synagogue councils, the Jewish religious leaders. It’s going to be from within the people that considered themselves God’s people that some of this persecution would come. Then also, “You are going to be called before kings to give your witness.” And many of the apostles did just that. What we see is it comes from within those who profess to be a part of the Body of Christ and from those outside of those who profess to be a part of the Body of Christ. Not everyone always embraces with open arms the message that we are saved freely by God’s grace. The reason is because we have a sinful nature and we want to think it’s something we do. Many people think it’s something we do to save ourselves. So when a Christian comes and says “No, it’s not you. It’s all Jesus. Jesus lived perfectly in your place and God credits that to your account. Jesus died with all your sins on him and that washes away the guilt of your sins. Through faith in that message, you stand forgiven.” It sounds too good to be true. Many people in their sinful nature rebel against that truth. They have no use for it, no time for God, and at times no time for the messengers that bring that message. So yet today we are going to be going out among wolves just as Luther did, just as Daniel did, just as Paul did, just as the apostles did. Just as in those times, sometimes it comes from within, and sometimes it comes from those without.

Sometimes the wolves we have to face are ourselves. Sometimes we can see clearly what God has said, what is right and what is wrong. But we know that when we proclaim that to someone that’s a good friend, or maybe a relative, it might cost us that friendship. It might cost us that relationship with that relative for a time.

Now, what are we going to do? What keeps you or me from doing what we know is the right thing to do before God quite often is ourselves. We know what God would have us do but we aren’t willing to lose what we think we might lose. So we change the subject. We stay silent. Or we dance around the issues and don’t talk about the sin

that someone that we love is caught up in. We don't talk about how they strayed from God. We just sit back and hope someone else will. Sometimes the wolf that we work and overcome is ourselves, not just those outside of us. Quite often it's ourselves.

It kind of makes you wonder, how could Daniel be so willing to do what he did? How could Paul stand in front of Rome and give that good answer and be just thrilled to death (like he was in that last paragraph) that he got the chance to share the Gospel with the Gentiles even though everyone seemed to have deserted him? How could Luther do that, face those things? What you and I face is not that severe. It's not death. Yet Satan seems to have gotten smarter and keeps us from doing the work that God has called us to do.

I would say that in the face of death, you and I as Christians know that our only answer is Christ. But at times in the face of life, we come up with a different answer other than Christ when it comes to doing what God has called us to do. We know we have failed our God. Then we read in these verses where it says "stand firm. He who stands firm to the end will be saved." You and I recognize how often we haven't stood firm. Maybe we start to get a little bit shaky. Maybe we start to think, "Man, I've failed my God. How could my God possibly love me?" That's when we need to go back to the truths that we know. We are not saved by what we do or what we've done well before our God. We are saved by what Christ did for us. We are saved by faith in Christ's life and death, not faith in our good efforts or our good intentions or our good results. We are saved by Christ's life and death.

If we are to remain as his faithful witnesses, that's what we always need to be focused upon, not upon ourselves. Satan wants you to look at your shortcomings. He wants you to beat yourself up so that you don't ever try to share Jesus Christ again. A faithful witness, like we saw Daniel or Paul or Luther do, looks outside of himself and focuses upon Jesus.

We take to heart then the words of Psalm 1. Meditate on God's Word day and night and see his love and his forgiveness and that it is not in any way dependent upon you. Then we become the faithful witnesses God enables us to be because we take our focus off ourselves and focus on our Savior. Then we are willing to endure hardships. We are willing to endure persecution. We are willing to endure whatever the Lord allows into our lives, even the stuff that sounds as terrible as that last paragraph in our Gospel, because we have a rock that is higher than ourselves. We have a Savior that loves us perfectly and absolutely, and our desire is to serve him and not ourselves. Through our Baptism, through the Lord's Supper, and through his Word, he strengthens us so that we can do just that, even when we are faced with ridicule at what we proclaim, because our God's love for us is that strong. It's so strong it overcomes us and saves us. It's so strong, it overcomes us and moves us to continue this Reformation work. Proclaim God's Word faithfully.