

Being “Numbered With Transgressors”

Faith Is Required

It has always amazed me that Rabbis and Jewish people can read the Book of Isaiah and especially chapter 53 and not know that Jesus is the Messiah promised by God. When one considers the prophecies found in Isaiah fulfilled by Jesus it is clear it was speaking of specific person and Jesus fulfilled chapter 53 and much more. In our passage of study this morning Jesus warns there will be those who resist the truth of the Gospel and in addition to people’s resistance to the Gospel some of these people will bring trouble to Christians. They will persecute Christians and do horrible acts in order to not have to face God and His truth. I know you have heard the saying “blind faith”. This does not refer to belief in God, His Word the Bible or His Son Jesus Christ. There is so much logical support, historical and archeological evidence and the Bible itself has proven to be accurate over thousands of years that even though we cannot see God or touch Him our faith is grounded on truth and it is but a step of faith to believe in Jesus as one’s Savior – it is not a leap of faith or blind faith. On the other hand, it is blind faith and a giant leap to be an unbeliever. The efforts that unbelievers go to in their efforts to disprove the existence of God is amazing. For example, the unscientific theory of evolution without facts is presented as absolute fact, which is false. Creation theory, on the hand, is presented as theory because it cannot be empirically proven. I believe many atheists believe there is a God, but because of their fallen sin nature they just do not want to be accountable to God. They desire to live in sin and not call it sin so they are not convicted of sin.

Since the resurrection of Christ, the preaching of the Gospel of Christ has brought change not only in hearts and souls but to governments and societies. These changes have come at a high price and the price is counted by the lives of martyrs and it is increasing. More people were murdered and martyred for their belief in Christ in the 20th Century than the combined 19 centuries before. The pace of those being murdered because of their belief in Christ in the 21st Century is accelerating. As believers, what are we to do in these growing troubled times? Well, my beloved, we are to do as believers have done throughout the centuries – hold fast to our faith, preach the gospel to anyone who will listen and even to those who do not want to listen and trust God is in control, that He has a purpose and our lives are to be lived for His glory no matter what the cost is here on earth. Why should we count worship of God above our lives on earth? Because our eternity is guaranteed for those who persevere. The earth is not our home we are passing through on our way to heaven our eternal home.

As your pastor I am encouraged by hearing about your lives. To hear how you are sharing the gospel at work and as you live your lives. It is a blessing to be able to pray for you. Not only to be able to go to God and pray for your deliverance from suffering of physical and mental conditions that we all experience by living in a broken world but to ask God to embolden your faith and to give you courage as you live and to preach the gospel to the unsaved world. You may not know the eternal consequences of your actions until you arrive in heaven and see people God has placed in your life's path. My beloved, this morning - look to Christ and be encouraged He has given you the precious gifts of faith and the Holy Spirit and know He will never leave you.

Sometimes when we engage our culture with the Gospel we meet with resistance. Sometimes we may even meet up with hostility. But we must still be brave and valiant for the Gospel because if we are ashamed of the Gospel, our Lord tells us

He will be ashamed of us. This is stated in a number of places in the New Testament, but none more clearly as Jesus' words recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew, ³² “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32-33)

Resistance from the world should be expected and not come as a surprise when we experience it. Ephesians chapter 6 tells us that we should not only expect spiritual war but what we need to do to fight effectively in this epic battle until Christ returns and He puts an end to war forever. I have had doors closed on me and gospel tracts refused. I have been told not to preach the Gospel or use the Bible so much and what is amazing is this has happened in churches I have preached in. I have been physically attacked. I have suffered attempts on my life and the Lord intervened to save me. I can whole heartily say I am here today only because the Lord still wants to use me. All of this tells me I am on the right path and by Jesus' power Satan is on the defensive. If there is no spiritual attacks or opposition in your life you might want to ask yourself, why? Satan has his demons and the people under his influence attack those who are threats to his darkness. Satan leaves believers alone who are not working to advance the kingdom of Christ for they are no threat to his plans. Let me ask, by the power of God which indwells you - are you a threat to Satan?

One of the things Joyce and I observed when serving overseas in difficult countries is when someone came to Christ, they knew there was a cost and often a risk to their mortal life and they were willing to pay the price. The persecution in some countries, especially those controlled by Islam is far more than anyone here has ever experienced. Let us now take time to prepare to hear the Word of God this morning and that it will prompt us to become people of action for the Gospel. Let us lift up to the Lord those who are suffering for the Gospel of Christ. I have asked *Brother Patrick to dedicate this time to our Lord and Savior in prayer.*

Opposition Will Come

It is very odd that seemingly without cause, when you engage people with the Gospel you will meet resistance. However, if one is saved and living for Christ this becomes part of our life experience for the world hates the gospel.

In the lives of the Apostles, there was a time when most everyone accepted them, they were accepted even by lost people. Here in chapter 22, Jesus is reminding the disciples of that earlier time, in verse 35 Jesus says, “**When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?**” They said, ‘Nothing.’” We have the account in Luke chapters 9 and 10 about Jesus sending out His disciples first and then later the 72 to preach the Gospel. As they went, they were told not to take provisions. We read of this in Luke 9, *Jesus “called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases,² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.³ And he said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.⁴ And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.⁵ And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.’⁶ And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.”* (Luke 9:1-6) They did not experience persecution. Later in chapter 10 Jesus sends out the 72 giving the same instructions concerning their travel and preaching. Jesus adds, in verse 3, “**Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.”** (John 10:3) Jesus wants them prepared. However, it appears, they did not experience persecution. In verse 17 we read, “**The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!’”** There was no resistance to the Gospel. Maybe, Satan did not think the Gospel a threat because Jesus had not risen. However, this would change for the disciples who become apostles and all who dared to preach the true Gospel once Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus tells them in verse 36, “**But now let the one who has a**

moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.” So, my beloved, as it has been throughout the history of Christ’s Church, if you decide to be obedient and preach the Gospel of Christ you should expect resistance and hostility and even persecution. Therefore, prepare for battle by Jesus’ power, by the power of God the Holy Spirit that dwells within. **Brother Marion please read Ephesians 6, verses 10 to 20.**

We are often too timid or fearful to speak of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our need addressed in this text today is the need for boldness. We can, at times, fail to share the Gospel out of the fear of man. We may be afraid of what someone might think of us. We may also be afraid that if we share the Gospel, then they will know we are Christians and we will have to alter the way we behave in front of them. Or perhaps, we think because of our behavior our witness is already ruined. We must behave as believers and we must fear God and not man. We need to live as believers and not as lost people.

Boldness Is Crucial

We also need to be bold and share the true Gospel, not some watered-down half-hearted version. My beloved, Jesus calls us to be brave and speak eternal truth for Christ. When we do, Jesus warns us to not be caught off guard when people are hostile and do not like us anymore. Notice with me in our text this morning the change that is about to take place. Before, the disciples were met with friendship on the gospel road. Now, they will meet hostility. Also, notice the reason for the change, Jesus was with them and now He will be counted among sinners, verse 37 says, “**he was numbered with the transgressors.**” Yet, another prophecy fulfilled.

Up until this point Jesus has been the provider for the disciples. However, things are changing rapidly. Jesus says to His disciples in verse 35, “**When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?**” **They said,**

“Nothing.”³⁶ He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.”

Just as we heard in Luke chapter 9 and here in chapter 22. With the exception of Jesus sending out the disciples and the 72 it has been Jesus performing the miracles, teaching in the temple, preaching the Gospel of Good News, providing for the needs of the disciples and the crowds that followed them. The disciples have lacked nothing; Jesus has provided for their needs. People saw Jesus as the possible leader of the rebellion against Rome. Even the disciples wondered upon this. People saw Jesus as one who possessed great power; He healed those who were brought to Him. From a few fish Jesus fed thousands and He even raised the dead to life. The masses thought Jesus was the One they had been praying to come forth for generations that had come to now fix everything.

This attitude towards Jesus was held by those closest to Him; they thought Jesus was preparing to set up God’s Kingdom on earth and all the forces of evil would be destroyed. In fact, just a little earlier the disciples in the upper room had argued who would be the greatest in the coming kingdom. They thought everything was going to fall into place, after all, up to this time there had been little resistance to the Gospel. What push-back that they had experienced had come from the religious leaders and when Jesus took power and established God’s Kingdom they would be dealt with. The people loved Jesus; when He entered Jerusalem, the masses of people “took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!’” (John 12:13) One thing I want you to take away with you from today’s message is this truth; **the fallen world will tolerate Jesus and Christianity only if it thinks it will benefit from it.** This is the reason people wanted Jesus to perform more miracles, expected Jesus to be the conquering King. Even Judas when he came to the realization of who Jesus truly was betrayed Him because he perceived Jesus would

not give him the power and position, he desired. Jesus ministry has reached a point of change; Jesus would give His life for the sins of all people and except for those who believed in Him as the Messiah sent by God as the atoning sacrifice for peoples sins, except for those who believed in Him, the world would now hate Jesus because they did not get from Him what they wanted – power, position, more miracles, the defeat of the Romans. **The fallen world will tolerate Jesus and Christianity only if it thinks it will benefit from it.** The fallen world was not concerned about eternity but they were concerned about what they would receive in the here and now.

It was because of this sin nature that Jesus prayed for His disciples to remain faithful. In the Gospel according to John we read Jesus' prayer to God the Father, "I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." (John 17:9-15)

Jesus prays that after He is gone, His disciples will remain faithful while under the pressure of persecution. Jesus will not be with them to keep them day-by-day as He has done. From now on, His followers will need to be prudent and cultivate courage in order to live in the fallen world. The real issue here is that Christ's followers are going to have to make it in the world like everyone else. For this reason, Jesus tells them, in verse 36, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a

knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.” Just as it is today, a missionary or evangelist will need to take precautions when they preach the Gospel and they will need money to provide for their needs. Jesus will no longer be with the disciples and provide for them; they must take the initiative to earn money and provide for their own needs while they do ministry. Some of the disciples earned a living. Paul, for example, was a tent maker at times and at times he lived on the support of churches and Christians.

Jesus is telling His disciples to be courageous and take a sword to protect yourselves; is Jesus speaking literally or figuratively? I believe Jesus is speaking figuratively about the type of courage they will need and that their true sword, as Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians was, **“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** (Ephesians 6: 17) Although, it appears at least one disciple took Jesus literally, for in short while, Peter would use a sword to lop the ear off one of the men in the gang coming to arrest Jesus. What was Jesus’ reaction to this? It can be found in all 4 gospel accounts, Jesus tells Peter, **“Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?”** (John 18:11) Even though Jesus was counted among the transgressors, He was not a transgressor and He is saying we are not to live as transgressors.

Preparation, Obedience, Action

Now comes change, the time has arrived when Jesus will no longer be welcomed by most and soon His disciples will no longer be welcomed by the masses either. Reading at verse 37, **“For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.”**³⁸ And they said, **“Look, Lord, here are two swords.”** And he said to them, **“It is enough.”** What is this change? Jesus is now considered a **“transgressor”**. Here, Jesus quotes an Old Testament passage, quoting the prophet

Isaiah, ¹¹ “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was **numbered with the transgressors**; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:11-12)

Most theologians see Isaiah 53 as a great and divine poem with the servant of God being the One who gives up everything and allows Himself to be mistreated and to suffer, so that, He may free His beloved people. All of chapter 53 is about Jesus. The One identified in chapter 53 can only be Jesus and He is the One Israel has been waiting for, He is the Messiah. Chapter 53 is so striking and so clearly about Jesus that in worship times in Jewish Synagogues chapter 53 is never read. This is the result of fear of the truth. The Jewish people are still enslaved to salvation by works and have missed God’s gift of grace and faith given through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is my hope that through the words of God’s prophet Isaiah and the New Testament scriptures this morning you know beyond a doubt that both Isaiah and Luke are speaking of Jesus the Messiah and Jesus God incarnate and Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Isaiah inspired by God wrote of Jesus over 600 years before Jesus was born. I wonder how much he understood of what he wrote? He was obedient to write as God directed and has influenced and changed people for over 2600 years now. Turn with me to the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8, beginning in verse 26. I will give you a minute to get there. Reading at verse 26, “**Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is a desert place.** ²⁷ **And he rose and went. Philip is obedient to God. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship** ²⁸ **and was**

returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. *God's words are eternal and have been and are still and will be used to penetrate people's hearts until Christ's return.* ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.'
³⁰ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' ³¹ And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' *My beloved, we are to be like Philip, obedient to God and His Word and help others understand God's Words and what they mean for their life. And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.* ³² Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was *from Isaiah 53:7 and 8*; 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.' ³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.' ³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and **beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.** ³⁶ And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on **his way rejoicing.**" (Acts 8:26-39) I think if Isaiah was here today, he would be so excited; first he would shout, "I knew it, I knew it – God was revealing to me things of the coming Messiah and the Messiah is Jesus!" Secondly, he would say "I understand, we are the transgressors God spoke of and Jesus the sinless One became counted among us in order to save us. What an amazing God who would give His only Son for our salvation!"

As Philip helped the Ethiopian understand Isaiah's words, but in truth, not Isaiah's words, for they are the Words of God given to the prophet Isaiah. Are you

reading and growing in understanding of God's Words enabling you to help others? One should begin by learning the Old Testament and knowing the New Testament that is built upon the Old. When one spends time studying are you not amazed by God? As God reveals who He is and His plan for the salvation of mankind and how He will deal with the evil one – it is God's plan, not a plan of men, but of God and it works for all eternity. Oh, my beloved, what love God has for mankind that He would go to such lengths to save us. Are you amazed by the grace of God shown in His plan of salvation of sinners?

I pray we are more and more amazed as we are the ones who are blessed to know more than Isaiah knew. We know whom it is that Isaiah wrote about. We know that Jesus came and died a transgressor's death and we know that we are those whom He was numbered with transgressors for. Hearing these truths, we come to understand, it is all for those who are called to salvation, these are some of the greatest truths we could ever hear. However, for those outside of salvation, following One who is numbered with transgressors is highly illogical. They do not see the truth of why Jesus was numbered with transgressors. They simply see a man killed and hung between 2 men who violated society's laws.

Before, the world accepted Jesus and His followers because they felt Jesus could give them something. They thought Jesus was a means to an end; fame and riches were in their sight. The lost world hates Jesus and His followers because there is nothing, nothing they can get from a crucified Savior who was numbered with sinners. According to them, Jesus has nothing to offer and all His followers are worthless as well.

In fact, Jesus and His commands do nothing but impinge on their life style. So, rather than the world accepting Christians, the world hates Christ and all His followers. In John's Gospel, we have recorded the rest of what Jesus told them on

that day. In chapter 15 we read Jesus' words, ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: *as recorded earlier in Matthew 10:24*, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: *quoting Psalm 35:19*, 'They hated me without a cause.'" (John 15:18-25) Please understand, the world demands tolerance of everything, except Christianity. They want the Hindu and the Buddhist and the Wicken and the Homosexual all to be tolerant and get along. However, if you are a Christian the world is not tolerant, for God's truth convicts and the world desires its sin. The fallen world seeks after darkness.

As believers God calls us to engage the lost and share the Gospel of Christ. We need to prepare for resistance and hostility and even prosecution. My prayer for us as a community of Christ is to be obedient and engage in evangelism understanding that the Gospel and the depravity of the world are at enteral odds with each other and will remain so until Jesus returns and casts the devil into the Lake of Fire. Jesus warned the disciples and believers from every age to stand firm and not back down to the world. We are to be bold and share the Word of God as He has given it – do not water-down the Gospel to be more acceptable to the world.

My brothers and sisters boldly proclaim Christ and let the world react by throwing a fit, if it must. Be brave and give your lost family and friends the undiluted

pure Gospel and if they rebel and become hostile, at least they know the truth. When we give our family and the world the real bold version and truth of God - we have shown them love. If we share a watered-down version this reveals - we love ourselves. Stand firm, evangelize the lost with the Word of God! Amen!