

“The Holy Spirit’s Implanted Word”

St. John 16:5-15

May 10, 2020

SERMON 1913

by Michael David Henson

The sermon text is from James 1:21, “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostles who gathered on that Maundy Thursday were no doubt surprised by the sermon which Jesus gave. {In last week’s Gospel,} Jesus tells them that He was visibly going away and {In this week’s gospel,} He tells them that the Holy Spirit would be sent to be with them. This invisible guide would use their words to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. **Convict the world? This seems to be a monumental task for such a small band of believers.** Furthermore, {next week}, Jesus explains that the world’s response to their message will be to seek to squash their message by killing them. **Yikes!** Nevertheless, as I mentioned last week, these last words of Jesus are intended to bring comfort to the sorrowful hearts of these apostles. Let us look deeper at this sermon of Jesus.

The collect for today begins with the premise upon which our prayer is based. It says, “O God, who makes the minds of the faithful to be of one will....” **First and foremost, our God is going to unite believers in the truth so that we have one will.** That will is none other than the will of the heavenly Father. Jesus tells the apostles, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.” **Thus, the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word preached by the Apostles is going to unite the Christian church in the teachings of God’s Word, and this Christian message will convict the world.** I am not telling you anything that you didn’t already know. As believers in Jesus Christ, we confess the one true Christian and Apostolic faith!

- The Introit from Psalm 98 says, “Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations” (Ps 98:1-2).
- Isaiah says, “Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth” (Is 12:5).
- We who have celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ, sing, “It was a strange and dreadful strife when life and death contended; The victory remained with life, the reign of death was ended. Holy Scripture plainly says that death is swallowed up by death Its sting is lost forever. Alleluia!”

Having been granted a united mind of one will, **this Sunday we pray that “among the manifold changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true joys are to be found.”** The battle for our heart is not over. My dear Christian friends, we are in danger. Christ’s battle is over. He is risen. Through faith in the Gospel promised in the Word, we have crossed over from death to life. Alleluia. **But now** St. James in today’s Epistle warns us, “Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.” Now

that we are in possession of Christ's redemption, we are in danger of losing it, for by and large, the world is not going to like our message. They don't want the Father's will to be done. In accordance with the Apostolic message, we will teach that salvation is found only through believing in Jesus Christ. Righteousness is not something we can achieve, but was secured through the suffering and death of Jesus, who goes to the Father. And the desires and actions of this world's ruler are condemned and awaiting judgment day.

The greatest danger is not at the beginning of the battle, but once the fighting is over. At the beginning of the battle we know there is going to be fighting. But after the battle is done, we are vulnerable. The adrenaline rises and we meet the foe, but when the threat is past, we can't get out of bed because of our depression.

--The establishment of universities with Christian goals and purposes was hard fought, but years later they have become purely secular as their Christianity faded away without a whimper.

--The marriage which began with great promises of "till death parts us" later succumbs to death by a thousand loveless paper cuts.

--The new Christian celebrates the resurrection with great fan-fare and emotion, but after some time, we leave behind our first love and are nothing but an outer shell of our former belief.

How does this happen? St James in today's Epistle speaks of two enemies which can deceive us and shipwreck our faith in Christ. The first is wrath and the second is covetous desires for immoral living.

In verse 19 he says, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." When we speak the Word which convicts the world, they will lash out at us. Those who like their sin, will not take our rebuke lightly. They will persecute the Christian message of believers.

The temptation is to try to fight fire with fire. Their actions will cause us to become angry, but we cannot act upon that wrath. St. James warns us, "the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Though they persecute us, we cannot persecute in return. Though they accuse us falsely, we must not lash out with hurtful words. Be "slow to speak." God's patience will keep us from speaking out of wrath. When we have been hurt by others, we need patience from God to go slow with it and to forgive. We need to be slow to speak, and leave room for God's Word to work. And in the end, if there is stubborn unrepentance, leave room for God's wrath

Second, St. James says, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." **The devil doesn't always need to attack our religion to wreck our faith, sometimes he simply feeds our sinful desires.** We all have a sinful nature of wickedness within, he simply teaches us to let it come out. "Let them speak the words of the Creed all they want," the devil says, while he leads them to lead a filthy life of sinful desires. Most seldom notice that their life of sinful desires conflicts with their words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." As they sing, "The Word of grace has purged away the old and evil leaven," they have returned to their immoral life of sin.

The world offers forbidden pleasures. Just a little fudging on the rules and there will be a life of toys and prestige. You don't have to engage, just parrot the world's

approval of those who live this way, and you will be respected. Give in and you won't even notice what is happening. It is deception of course. The consequences will ultimately overcome you, but by then it will be too late.

St. James warns us, "Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness..." The Christian life includes the daily fight against sin. **When sin bubbles up, we confess it and lay it aside.** That filthy sin is not the Christian's life. We have been given a new life in Christ. We seek forgiveness from Christ. St. James speaks of **meekness. The Christian cannot be proud, for that will surely be his downfall.** The Christian is not strong in himself, nor can he boast of his spiritual achievements. The Christian meekly confesses that if we had been without God's aid and counsel, we would have fallen long ago. Meekness means living in dependence upon God. St. James says, "...receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls."

St. James solution to "do not be deceived" is "the implanted Word." It is not enough to simply hang around the external Word. Don't comfort yourself that you sit in a pew or you sing a hymn. As last week's sermon explained, you can't trust your feelings either. Meekly confess your sins and trust in the Word's proclamation of Christ's forgiveness. A Christian is more than a pew-sitter. We pray that God's will be done in our lives and conversation.

In today's collect we meekly asked, "...**grant to Your people that they may love what You have commanded and desire what You do promise.**" **First**, God commands that we set aside our wrath and love our enemies. **Second**, God commands that we set aside our lustful thoughts and covetous desires for the things of this world. We pray that God would give us a love for patience and the setting aside of our own wrath. We pray that God would give us a love for confessing sins and receiving the forgiveness of sins.

God's comforting solution to our post-Easter danger is for the Holy Spirit to use the Apostles' Word to give His church of believers one mind. Jesus said, "when the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth." The Apostles' message has convicted the ruler of this world and his message of wrath and sinful desires. **The greatest truth is to believe in Jesus' righteousness.** Jesus says that the Holy Spirit "will take what is Mine and declare it to you." Jesus' suffering and death has earned free forgiveness and the Father wants you to have it. All who believe and are baptized will be saved. The message of Christ's redemption which is implanted through faith "is able to save your souls."

Today's collect speaks about "the manifold changes of this world." If nothing else, our present pandemic crisis teaches us that we do not know what the future holds. Our risen Lord knew what we needed in order to keep the faith in every situation. **Among the manifold changes of this life, we needed the preaching of the Apostolic message.** We needed a church that would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. There will always be those who seek to deceive Christ's believers. Jesus has sent us His Holy Spirit to curb our human anger and give us meekness to confess our sin and receive His forgiveness.

No matter what changes occur, nor how manifold they are, God has brought us forth by His word of truth. We are "a kind of first fruits of His creation." He is remaking us through His Apostolic Word and by the Holy Spirit's working. Our God is answering our prayer by directing our hearts to His Word where "true joys are to be found." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17). With the manifold

changes of this life, it is good to have the implanted Word of the One who does not change. The unchanging Father has determined to give you Jesus' righteousness through His Word by the power of the Holy Spirit.