

“The Cost of Truth” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent 2
March 16, 2025

- I. **Philippians 4:1** – ¹Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.
- II. **Being a Christian is not always roses and sunshine.**
 - a. I suppose being a human is not always roses and sunshine – let alone being a Christian!
 - b. The difference is that Christians are Christ followers, or believers in Jesus who are called to live through the struggles and temptations of life but still trust in their Savior and walk in His ways and not the world’s.
 - i. A life lived outside of Christ can be just as difficult when it comes to dealing with trials... no one is immune to the brokenness of the world.
 - ii. Yet, a Christian faces the trials... along with the temptations to fall away... the temptation to trust in things other than God.
 - iii. Each day, Christians face choices in how we will follow Christ and look to His ways....yet it doesn’t come without a cost.
 - c. For one thing, we read in Jeremiah that he was telling the people of Jerusalem that their whole world was going to come crashing down... they had turned from God, and He was bringing the hammer down on them.
 - i. What was their response?
 1. They didn’t repent... they were offended and decided Jeremiah needed to be executed!
 - ii. Jeremiah was rejected by the religious leaders and his own people for simply stating God’s truth.
 - d. We also read in our Gospel lesson as Jesus is told that Herod the Tetrarch wants to kill Him... but He’s not alarmed, He has a mission to do... which turns out to be dying for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and He knows that they will keep rejecting Him... and feels deep sorrow.
 - i. His message of truth put a target on His back from those in power... but it was also very painful for Him because He knew what rejecting Him meant – eternal separation from God. (John 3:18)
 - e. In our Epistle lesson, we read about another messenger of the truth, Paul.
 - i. He is calling the Church in Philippi to walk in Christ rather than be enemies of the cross – it says that he’s told them many times in the past and now with tears in his eyes, that these people walk as enemies of the cross of Christ... and their minds are on earthly things and it will be their destruction.
 - ii. Paul recognizes the constant pressure from enemies of the cross, and he is like Jesus in wanting them to turn to God rather than go the way of destruction and eternal separation from God.
- III. **As Christians we face a heavy price for walking in obedience to Christ.**

- a. Perhaps saying that Americans pay a heavy price isn't accurate compared to some of our brothers and sisters in places where Christians are being killed every day.
 - i. Yes, the cost for Christians to believe in Jesus and share the truth of Christ to their community and family is often total banishment, loss of family and career... and even death.
- b. Yet, we pay the cost for our faith as Christians in America too.
 - i. On one hand, we are ridiculed by those with no faith, as they consider us a bunch of brainwashed sheep... using a book that is full of half-truths and fairytales.
 - ii. On the other hand, we are ridiculed by those who see the Bible in a different way, who claim to be Christians, but have turned away from the truth of the Scriptures.
 - 1. In a way, Paul is addressing the same kind of people when he says that they are enemies of the cross... these were people that were rejecting the Word of God and the Good News and looking at their own way to be saved.
 - 2. Essentially, if we come up with our own understanding of the Gospel, and we begin to live by that instead of what Jesus taught us... we are the enemies of the cross of Christ described in the Bible.
- c. So what happens if you stand by the Scriptures to people who are going their own way?
 - i. What if you say that the Bible tells us that homosexual behavior is sin (Romans 1:26-27), that God created a man and woman to be married, but did not have in mind same sex marriage (Genesis 2:24) ... what if you say that living together outside of marriage is sin and you are breaking God's command (Hebrews 13:4)... what if you say that Jesus is the only path to eternal life and no other way exists in any other belief system including Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses or any other world religion (John 14:6)... What if you tell someone that God begins life at conception (Psalm 139:13-16) and we cannot justify taking an innocent life through abortion (Proverbs 6:16-17)... or what if we say that willfully sinful people who do not repent of their sins and come home to Jesus will go to hell (Luke 13:3, 5)... or what if we say that Jesus loved people enough to tell them to stop sinning rather than just being totally accepting of where they were at in their sin? (John 8:11)
 - 1. If you say these things found in the Bible, you will find out the cost of the truth.
 - 2. Just like Jeremiah... Just like Paul... just like Jesus.
- d. No, you may not be thrown in jail... but you may be labeled intolerant.
 - i. You may be called a Christian fundamentalist...

- ii. Or, excluded from some groups of friends...
- iii. You might be called an extremist... a hater... a hypocrite... a bigot.
- iv. People might reject you or simply stop asking you to hang out.
- e. Here is the point where Jesus, and even Paul, in tears look upon the people who are rejecting the truth and feel great loss.
 - i. Paul once said that he would gladly give up his salvation if it meant his Jewish brothers and sisters would come to faith in Jesus. (Romans 9:3)
 - ii. How many times did Jesus look out among the crowds and know that they did not believe... and their end was destruction?
- f. Of course we cannot judge the salvation of others, that is certainly up to God... but the Scriptures give us truth, and if people are rejecting that... Jesus is the one who says, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3)
 - i. My point today is not to have you go out and be a complete jerk to people by bashing them with the difficult truths of the Bible – but I want us to all consider that sometimes we must stand up for truth in order to obey Christ.

IV. **In the end, that is our ultimate goal... to obey Christ.**

- a. Why? Because Jesus gave up His very life so that we could walk in the freedom of forgiveness.
 - i. He knew that the truth would get Him killed, but it would set all who believe in Him free.
 - ii. He went to the cross by choice – because He certainly could have rejected that terrible experience by running away from it...
 - iii. Jesus died and rose again to bring us to glory – to give us eternal life.
- b. Paul is clear today as he says that we who believe in Jesus are citizens of heaven, and we await the day of His judgment so that our bodies will become like His glorious, resurrected, and eternal body.
 - i. There is no greater promise than what Jesus gives us through His death and resurrection – we are saved by His grace through our faith in Him.

V. **The cost of following Jesus** and His truth is not always roses and sunshine.

- a. Sometimes we will face backlash and trouble for simply standing by God's truth rather than what others want to hear... but I want all of us to remember... walking in Christ is a wonderful blessing and privilege.
- b. I'm not saying that we need to be the angry street preachers who shock people with the truths found in the Bible, but we can always be confident to stand up whenever the Lord calls on us to speak the truth... especially to our Christian friends.
 - i. We don't do this out of hatred... we speak the truth in love... which is the kind of love that Jesus had for the lost and those who reject Him... these are people who need the love of Christ in their lives.

- ii. So, my brothers and sisters in Christ, stand firm thus in the Lord, for He will guide you by the strength of His hand until you go home as a citizen of heaven. Amen.