

Sermon - May 1, 2016, Easter 6,

Plain and Simple Talk

John 16:23–33



Introduction:

Dear Friends in Christ

Grace and Peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We are in an era where we do specialize in doublespeak. An expert in language, Dr. William Lutz points that government and industry as the worst offenders in that practice, which Lutz described as “language designed to evade responsibility, to make

the unpleasant appear pleasant ... language that pretends to communicate but really doesn't. Language designed to mislead while pretending it doesn't.”

Some examples of doublespeak we hear almost every day are: “downsizing” instead of firing people, “reducing costs” instead of cutting salaries, “pre-owned” as opposed to used, “well loved” instead of old and worn out, “preemptive strike” instead of unprovoked attack, “enhanced interrogation” in place of torture.

In our Gospel reading for today, we see that Jesus is giving his final words, his “farewell instructions” in plain talk, to his disciples for he was leaving to where he came from in the physical form, but he said they will not be alone for the Holy Spirit will come.

But he wanted his disciples to know that they will have problems when he leaves, but that in him they will be at peace. Although the disciples seem to get at first, but Jesus tells them that maybe they haven't yet as we shall see.

For what followed afterwards wasn't pleasant at all. Jesus' earthly ministry is coming to an end. The betrayer has made his plan and even now is bringing the soldiers to arrest Jesus. The Lord will be charged, tried, and convicted all in a night. By nine o'clock the next morning, he will be hanging on a cross; by 3:00 p.m., he will be dead. Though his disciples will see him again in just three days, his return to the Father is also just weeks away. These are unsettling events for sure, but in the midst of all of that Jesus assures them that they will have peace in him.

The same plain words are also for us today.

First Jesus tells us we will have problems, problems of all kinds. As surely as the disciples back then we too face problems.

And the first problem we face which brings lots of complications is our misunderstanding of what the purpose of the Church is all about. Just as the disciples didn't seem to get what Jesus was telling them. He said: “I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

The disciples seem to understand it, they said: “Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! ³⁰ Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.”

But notice what Jesus says: “Do you now believe? ³² Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone.”

In other words Jesus was saying, do you really believe, do you really get what I'm doing? They understood clearly, did they figure out what Jesus was saying? They believed that Jesus came from God, that what he speaks is the truth. But... yes there is a but... "No, you don't get it", Jesus tells them. "You don't understand the cross at all! You don't understand why I must go to the cross, why I have to do this."

He even told Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Now hear what Peter answered back: "Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death" "I get it Jesus, and I'm ready to suffer with you as well." But Jesus, says, do you really? Do you really understand what I'm about to do Peter? Then he said: "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me." (Luke 22)

Peter you don't know what you are saying, do you? Do you understand why I'm doing this? The disciples have their problems, don't they!

There are those times in which we don't get it either. We don't get what God's purpose through the work of the Church. We rest more on the theology of glory rather than the theology of the cross!

Let me explain, there are two kinds of Theology that are at work in our Christian faith. One is what we call the Theology of the Cross which points to the cross of Christ, as the only source of knowledge concerning who God is and how God saves us.

But the Theology of Glory places a greater emphasis on human abilities and human reason. It puts the person on the driver's seat and do all they can to access God's grace. A theologian of glory could call evil good and good evil. But a theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is, plain talk.

Now, learning new terms like these ones, are good but, but what does it have to do with us? Well, lots, because just as the first disciples, sometimes we miss the point of what God's Kingdom is really about, we miss what church and the Christian faith is all about.

For example, las Sunday I thanked everybody for coming and taking part in the cleaning task, and mentioned as well that this is our church, the house of prayer that God has allowed us to have and enjoy, therefore we need to take care of it.

But at times we miss the point. We think that the church building is the primary aspect of our ministry. We think that what we do is more important than anything else. We think that our reason and our feeling and our desires are more important than anything else. And we also think that do this for God, and if we do this for God, God will have mercy on us. That's a theology of glory.

But a Theology of the Cross will point us to the purpose of the Church, it tells us that we are put here so we can win the lost, so that we can reach the lost and bring them to Christ. That's why God provides resources like this house of prayer, so that from here, being saved and restored into God's grace, and as we learn God's word we go out into the world to share that message. The problem is that often we miss that point and instead of looking at the church like a hospital for the soul we see the church more like a club.

In a club only selected people can become members and receive the benefit of that club, in a club there are mostly privileges and rights, and when those privileges are

takin away so goes the membership. But in a hospital, in our present health system, all have the chance to receive health benefits. The Church is like a hospital, and the primary role of the church is preaching the Gospel to the spiritually sick person. It is the proclamation of what Jesus did on the cross of Calvary for each one of us. So, every action we do, every service we offer to the church, every activity we plan, needs to be evangelistic in nature, because God's kingdom is about bringing Christ to the nations and the nations to Christ. Yes in the church we do have responsibilities and benefits as well, but all are geared at preaching the Gospel of Christ.

But, just like the first disciples, Jesus tells us plainly, that we will fail him. That there have been times that we have missed what the purpose of the Church is, yet Jesus says, you will have peace. You will have peace, because of what Jesus did on the cross for you, your sin is forgiven, grace is given to you, you are here because of his grace. We are his Church and continue being his Church because of his grace that restores once again. That's the theology of the cross. That's what the cross is all about.

And this theology of the cross extends even to our personal problems. Not only and perhaps quite often our personal problems lead us to miss the purpose of the church and fail God as well, but even there we hear Jesus say: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

I'm glad to hear that, because the devil, our sinful self, and the world around us will keep us from being the disciples Jesus calls us to be. We deserve nothing more than for him to turn his back on us, but the good news is that Jesus never does. Yes Jesus gives a plain talk about our problems. But he also gives a plain talk about our peace, no doublespeak for sure!

Even though in a few weeks he was to leave this world, and although he is not in this world physically, he told his disciples "you can peace in me." Today we can have peace in Jesus because he has overcome the world. In other words he was saying, look guys, "I leave the world not in defeat and death, but in victory." And that victory is yours! Through the forgiveness of your sins, through the Cross, that victory is ours now.

Yes he is not with us physically, but we do have the Holy Spirit and all his gifts that he has left for us to be in Christ, therefore at peace. Yes we can understand the and act on the purpose of the Church of preaching the Gospel because we have been forgiven and in his grace Christ has reconciled us to him.

We have received the water of baptism, and through baptism we are now in Christ. We do receive his body and blood, as Christ said in there he would give us his own, therefore we do take part of Christ, and if so we are at peace. True peace in him! In our baptism, and at his table, but also in his word that comforts us every day!

So today, dear friends we do rejoice for our sins have been forgiven, yes even the sins of not getting it, of not getting the message of the cross, yes for missing the point, the purpose of the Church, yes, even the sin of taking church as our club. Yes our sins are forgiven, come and receive it.

And as a result, because of that peace, we can speak clearly to the Father in Jesus' name. Hear once more what Jesus says: "Whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you" (v 23). Ask and you will be given! And when you ask in his will there is also peace, in knowing that he will answer your prayers.

You and I today, we the Church have one great consolation to keep going in the often rough road of discipleship and mission: that is the victory of Jesus that brings us peace.

Because we have been reconciled with God and are at peace with us, God hears our every cry. You are his special child. He will guide us, he will lead us, he will move us not only through the suffering we experience in this life, but even point us to the real reason why is it that we exist as a church, why we do have this building, he will give us heart in fire for those who are lost, he will give us the strength we need to keep going.

So that “through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3:10-11)

Are we burden with the cares of our own personal lives, hear what the Scripture says: “Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm 55:22)

Here in our gospel Jesus speaks plainly to the disciples and tells us to ask in his name, that we would pray, it is his request.

Today, dear friends, rest at peace for Jesus tells you “I have overcome the world!” This is our peace as we live our calling as Jesus’ disciples here and now, at church but in our daily lives as well. There is no doublespeak, no mixed message. Just plain talk from the Savior who died and rose to make you his own. You are his own! Praise the Lord you his children! In His name, amen.