

## **“Fear not, confess!” Mat 10:26-33**

**“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.**

Peter and John of Capernaum, also known as Peter the apostle and John the beloved disciple of Jesus, Saul of Tarsus, known also as Paul the apostle, Jan Huss, Martin Luther, John, Duke of Saxony, George, Margrave of Brandenburg, Ernest, Duke of Lueneberg, Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, John Frederick, Duke of Saxony, Francis, Duke of Lueneburg, Wolfgang, Prince of Anhalt...

What are these people? Or better, what do they all have in common? Any ideas? They experienced the fulfillment of Jesus' words. “Beware, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.” (Mt 10:17-18)

Jesus the Christ came to deliver the most wonderful news to the world living in darkness. After He had spent a significant time with His disciples, teaching them about the mysteries of God, He sent them to deliver His message.

“The Kingdom of God is near.” The reign of gracious God has begun. This is the message of greatest joy, the message of peace, the message of hope. God the Creator has come to dwell among us, and to dispel all the darkness and bring us in His wonderful light.

But then Jesus continues and He warns His disciples about what to expect in return: “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves ... beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. [...] Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

Who is Jesus addressing with these words? The answer is, – every Christian in every time and every place. Jesus speaks to all His followers till the end of this age, He tells us what to expect and what following Him will cost us.

Peter and John were brought before the high priests and rulers, confessed Jesus, were beaten, imprisoned and threatened. Paul was brought before Felix and

Festus and probably before the Roman emperor himself, confessed Jesus and was murdered. As were the rest of the apostles.

Jan Huss was brought before the inquisition. Confessed Jesus. Then was burned at the stake. Martin Luther was brought before the emperor Charles V in Worms. Confessed Jesus. Was condemned as false teacher and made an outlaw, a person whom anybody could murder without fear of retribution.

And on this very day, in 1530, those seven men, whose names we mentioned, these seven lords of German lands, who had become disciples of Jesus Christ, and whose hearts were captured by the Gospel of forgiveness and freedom, stood in the city of Augsburg before the throne of emperor, risking with their lands, properties and even lives, and confessed the truth about Jesus Christ.

Their confession was a written one. It was written by a man named Phillip Melanchthon, the closest colleague of Martin Luther. When Melanchthon together with the lords arrived in Augsburg, they found an unpleasant surprise.

Roman church had asked Dr. Johannes Eck, a theologian from Ingolstadt, famous not so much with his good knowledge of the Bible, as with his rude and aggressive style in disputation, to prepare a critique of what was wrong with Luther's teachings.

He had done his best. He had put together 404 accusations, he had taken Luther's words out of context and twisted them, he had quoted different false teachers and have put all this in one bag, just to portray Luther and the lords as heretics. That would mean, as people outside the law.

Melanchthon immediately set out to write the summary of what they truly believed. The summary of the Gospel as it is given to us in the Bible. He used documents prepared already before, by Luther and their other colleagues.

Martin Luther couldn't be there himself. He stayed 250km away, where he was still under protection of John, duke of Saxony, as the duke was very concerned about Luther's safety. There was still an exchange of letters, but because of the distance, Luther couldn't be involved too closely.

Came 25<sup>th</sup> of June. 1530. The city of Augsburg. Emperor Charles V, his counsellors, representatives of the Roman church, the most influential people of that day were gathered together in the palace of the bishop of Augsburg to give hearing to these evangelical lords, to allow them to defend themselves.

The day was unusually hot, therefore, all the windows were kept open. Great crowds were gathered outside the palace. Christian Bayer, the vice-chancellor of John, the duke of Saxony, who was known for his thundering voice, was entrusted to read the text of the confession, the same that we know today and Augsburg Confession.

And, so he did. Thus, every word was heard not only in the palace, but also the crowds outside devoured every word that was confessed. When Christian Bayer

had finished reading the confession, the crowds uttered shouts of joy. The Gospel of God's undeserved grace was read before the emperor.

After the confession was read the seven lords confessed before the emperor that this is what they believe to be the truth, and that even if their lives were in danger, they wouldn't deny the truth of their Lord Jesus Christ.

No one knew it back then. No one was planning or hoping for it. But on that day, out of the courageous confession of these men, church of the Augsburg Confession, or as we usually say, Lutheran Church was born. Our church. You know how the Church is created, right?

Not by writing constitutions, not by having offices, not by building buildings, not even by serving neighbors, but by the power of God's Word and God's Spirit. On this day, back then, as the Word of God was boldly confessed, exactly as Jesus had foretold, new church was born. Our church.

Our church is called confessional church. It doesn't mean that, yes, we have our written confessions from 16<sup>th</sup> century, and that's about it. To be confessional is about action. About speaking, confessing, sharing the message that Jesus has given us, boldly sharing it with all who still dwell in darkness.

It is told that the bishop of Augsburg, who sat next to the emperor after hearing the Augsburg Confession read, had said: "This is nothing, but the pure truth." The pure truth. The Gospel.

But still, it didn't bring peace, instead, exactly as Jesus had foretold, it brought the very opposite. It brought more divisions, and it brought even war. Remember, "you will be hated by all for my name's sake."

Why so, why the most wonderful news causes such reactions as hatred and rejection? It is very simple. When you confess the truth, at the same time you also do something else, – you expose and condemn all falsehood.

When you confess the light of the Gospel, it exposes the darkness of this world and of our hearts. People either welcome the truth, or they hate the messenger. When you deliver them Jesus' message, they have only two options.

First, to accept the truth, to repent and believe in the Gospel, and that means turning their lives upside down, and that is the best thing that can happen with anyone. Second option, to hate you for you have exposed the darkness of their hearts and rebellion against true God.

And you know too well, that nothing has changed since the day when Jesus spoke these words. We are His Church, confessing church, we are sent to confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord and that every knee will bow before Him.

Either now, as His brothers and sisters, or, when He returns in His glory to judge the living and the dead. There is no way around it. But a sinful heart cannot, would not accept this message. This is, why the message of peace

causes divisions, even amongst the closest to us, and the words of love bring out hatred. You know what I am talking, right? You have experienced it, right?

And what happens, when in response to our attempts to share the Gospel, to bring people joy, and peace and hope, we receive rejection and ridicule? We fear people. We fear people.

Where we live, we still don't need to worry about being murdered, or imprisoned, or even arrested for we come in Jesus name. People may try to silence us, to make fun of Christians, as you can see it more and more in media.

And we fear. We prefer to feel comfortable in this world. Welcomed by this world. We don't want to offend anyone. We don't want to experience rejection and awkward situation because of our confession.

And we keep silent. We ignore Jesus' command. The all-powerful Word of God, that can change the hardest of hearts is silenced. People who are in darkness remain in darkness. The evil one wins. Because of our silence.

Jesus knew and knows exactly how you feel. He knows all the fear that you may experience. For He experienced it all. He confessed before the high priests, He confessed before Pontius Pilate. He knew what will follow. The cross. And He confessed. Be sure, He knows our fear.

This is, why in today's reading He comforts us three times. Don't fear. Don't fear those who may reject and hate you. They rejected and hated our Lord Jesus as well, we shouldn't expect anything else.

But remember, they are not our enemies. They are captives of sin and devil. And only the Gospel through our confession can free them, change their hearts and make them into children of God, into our beloved brothers and sisters.

Don't fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. The most that the world can take from us is our bodies, but even then, they can't take our souls. For they are safe in the Father's hand. And we'll get new bodies anyway.

And when there is a moment that may cause you fear and keep silent, then remember, that there is only one we really need to fear, the One who has power to kill the body and the soul. The One who has all authority in heaven and on earth. That's Him we need to be afraid to offend or upset, not people.

Finally, Jesus says for the third time 'fear not' and explains why. For everything is in God's hands. Even the smallest and most insignificant things don't happen without Him knowing. When a sparrow falls on the ground, He knows it.

When we begin to lose our hair, He knows it. He knows the number of your hair. And in His eyes, you are worth much more than many sparrows. In His eyes you are worth more than His own life. Jesus showed it, undoubtedly.

For you, for God's children, for heirs of His Kingdom, there is nothing to worry about. You are in the Father's hands. You will be with Him. Nothing in entire creation can separate you from Him and His love. Only you yourself can.

“So everyone who acknowledges [confesses] me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

We are confessing church. We are the church of Jesus Christ, of Paul the apostle, we are the church of Dr. Luther and the lords who risked their lives for the Gospel. The world needs our confession, even if they hate the messengers.

And we have nothing to fear. For we already have gained everything, – the world to come, the new heavens and new earth are yours. Fear not, confess! Amen.