

Lent III

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Preacher: Fr. Paul Beutell

[0 : 00] Walk as children of light. The words from this morning is Epistle Lesson in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Being Christians who live in the light of Christ is not for the faint of heart.

The teachings of Jesus Christ, the teachings throughout all of the scriptures, at times can be confrontational. Living and declaring them faithfully is for those willing to be bold for the faith. Willing to be bold for Jesus Christ. We see the boldness required for faithfulness throughout today's lessons. In the gospel, Jesus was doing something good, and yet he was accused of using the power of Satan to do it.

Others were just unimpressed and wanted additional proof from Jesus before they would believe in him. How similar is this to what we face in our day?

Often when we are doing good, we are called evil. Well, those who are doing evil are called good. How many need more proof of the saving power of Jesus than the miracle that he has made each of our lives by turning us away from sin unto salvation by the Holy Spirit?

[1 : 32] We cannot be faint of heart to overcome such opposition. The epistle also shows us the boldness we need to live in the light of Christ.

In Ephesians 5.11, St. Paul exhorts, Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. The King James Version of this verse is a little clearer, for it uses the word reprove instead of expose, and that's closer to the Greek.

St. Paul's exhortation here, his instruction here, is not just to reveal the wrong, but to confront it. We are called to call out evil, the evil we see, and then seek to correct it.

That takes boldness. It's not for the faint of heart. The evil St. Paul was exhorting the Ephesians to reprove are the same ones we have to reprove today.

In verses 3-5 of the epistle, he states, But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

[2 : 55] For this you know that no fornicator, unclean person, or covetous man who is an idolater has any inheritance in the kingdom of God and Christ.

When we Christians who are living in the light see such behavior within the church or in the lives of fellow Christians, we must reprove it. We must call it out and seek for it to be repented of.

The church and any parish or congregation loses its right to speak for Christ when it overlooks greed or wingset couples cohabitating prior to marriage or any other form of fornication, same-sex relationships, or any lifestyle so-called that is contrary to the gospel.

Individual Christians lose their right also when they remain in churches that allow these or if they overlook it when children or grandchildren, friends or other relations who claim they are Christians live in such a manner.

We heard this echoed in the Old Testament lesson. What did Moses say? What did God tell Moses to say? Teach these things, this law to your children and to your grandchildren, raise them up in this faith?

[4 : 19] St. Paul is unwavering about this in 1 Corinthians 5, verses 9-13. Here he states, I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people, yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother or a sister who is sexually immoral. Or covetous. Or an idolater. Or a reviler.

Or a drunkard. Or an extortioner. Not even to eat with such a person. What do I have to do with judging those also who are outside, meaning outside of the church?

Do you not judge those who are inside? Obeying this charge from Scripture is ultimately a matter of who is first in our life. Christ or those other people.

Jesus is very direct about this. In St. Mark 8, verse 38. He says, For whoever is ashamed of me and my words and this adulterous and sinful generation of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels.

[5 : 34] If we fail to reprove sinful lifestyles and behaviors being practiced by those we know are or claim to be Christians out of fear of being shamed or canceled or to avoid conflict, then we are not living in the light.

Living in the light that when necessary chooses Christ over all things takes boldness. It is not for the faint of heart.

As challenging as living in the light is, it's fair to ask how are we to do it? In the Gospel, Jesus tells us every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation and a house divided against a house falls.

The Holy Spirit makes us capable of reproving the darkness when we are fully for Christ. and are no part divided with an inclination towards the world.

Here again, Scripture is clear about this. St. James chapter 4 verse 4 states, Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity, meaning it's in opposition to, it's hostile to, God, who therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

[6 : 59] God. That is a bold declaration of truth. Unwillingness to reprove fellow Christians, particularly those whom we have charge over or have fellowship with, is a means of choosing sides with the world.

That choice is deadly for our souls. It can make us an enemy of God. Ezekiel chapter 33 is a powerful exhortation to all who have charge over other Christian lives.

For example, bishops, priests, and other clergy, parents, grandparents, godparents, and those who are more mature in their faith. In verse 8 of that chapter, God says to them, when I say to the wicked, through scripture, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way.

That wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul.

We cannot force fellow Christians who live in darkness to repent and turn back to Christ. The most we can do is warn them and then pray that they will. But in doing this, we have to check our motive.

[8 : 35] Our motive must be to imitate God in Christ as St. Paul instructs in the epistle. Ephesians 5, 1 and 2 states, Therefore be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Our motive for reproving others in their sinfulness must be love. Our love for them. walking in love and walking in the light are synonymous.

Our love for the souls of those we reprove must imitate the love God has demonstrated for us in giving Jesus to us and for us to die for our sins that we might be saved.

We must love them enough to be willing to risk our relationship with them or anything else for the sake of their salvation. If this is not our motive, if we're just disgusted or angry or anything else, then we have to remain quiet and pray we will gain that sort of love for them.

yes, being Christians that live in the light and reprove the darkness is not for the faint of heart.

[10 : 04] It takes men and women who love others the way Christ loves us. It takes men and women bold enough to reprove acts of darkness out of love and concern for the souls and lives of those who commit them.

may you and I be those men and women. May we be men and women who are bold for Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.