

SERMON FOR DECEMBER 27, 2020

TEXT: JOHN 21: 24

THEME: HIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE

This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

In the name of Jesus:

The days after Christmas for many in our society are depressing. The big holiday is over, the gifts have been unwrapped, the wrapping paper thrown away, all that is left of Christmas is to take down the decorations and get rid of the tree. But not so fast! In the Church, Christmas isn't a day to be celebrated, it is a season. We celebrate Christmas today, tomorrow and into the New Year.

But let's be honest, it is only natural to feel a little bit tired after Christmas. And this year, maybe life itself has exhausted you. You are worn down and worn out. And even worse, as the old year ends and the new year begins (and aren't we all ready to be done with 2020), we know that there will be plenty of trials and troubles down the road awaiting us in 2021.

Christians today feel especially worn out. The truths that we are learned and lived for all of our lives have been and continued to be under attack. It used to be that you could know the truth and believe in the truth.

Now? Everything is relative. People today believe and live as if there is no absolute truth.

Do you need evidence? How many times have you heard the phrase: “Well, that is what YOU believe, I believe something different.” Feelings and emotions have replaced truth as the foundation of our society. Rather than considering the facts many act emotionally. And that is one of the reasons why this day and these readings in the Scripture are so important, for the Apostle John tells us that what he has written about Jesus, and what he has told us about Jesus in his Gospel and in his other writings are facts about Jesus and is the absolute truth about Jesus. And as such, you can put your faith in what he says and live your life according to the truth he reveals.

In the days after Christmas, the Church celebrates minor festivals to learn from those who have gone before us, give thanks for their witness, and learn from them the truth that Jesus is the only Lord and Savior. Yesterday was the Feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr in the Church. Tomorrow is the Day when we remember the Holy Innocents, those children who were killed by Herod as he attempted to kill the baby Jesus. Today is the Day of St. John the Apostle, a day when we remember that what he has written, indeed what has been written in all of Scripture, is true.

That is why John writes: “This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.” John bore witness to who Jesus was and what Jesus did. And so he wrote about it, he staked his life on it, as did the other disciples. He suffered for this truth that Jesus is the only Lord and Savior, and that by believing in Him you have life by His name.

One would think, especially during this Christmas season, that John would begin his Gospel with the birth of Jesus. But he doesn't, he instead takes us back even before Jesus' birth, even before creation. John opens his Gospel with these beautiful words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” John tells us that Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He was with God and He was God. Jesus was fully God, He is King of all creation.

Jesus is God's Word, His communication to us. And how does God the Father communicate with His creation and with humans? By sending His Son. In the flesh. As a baby. This is why John writes: “ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son From the Father, full of grace and truth. **16** For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace

and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

Jesus makes known the love God the Father has for you and for all creation. For John also writes: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3: 16). All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Each of us deserves God's wrath. But God in love sends Jesus, "not to punish, but to save. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world be saved through Him."

No wonder Christmas is such a joyous occasion, and no wonder that the Church celebrates not just a day but a season of Christmas. God has saved sinners through the God-Man, Jesus. John, throughout his Gospel, continually teaches about Jesus' divinity and His humanity. When Christ becomes a human being, He speaks to us, He performs miracles, and He dies for us. He does so as God's Son in human flesh. Jesus performs miracles to show He is God's Son, He turns water into wine, He feeds thousands, He walks on water, He heals the sick and He raises the dead, all to prove without a doubt that Jesus is God's Son. John was there as a witness!

Whatsmore, John was there when Jesus was crucified. All of the other apostles fled the scene when Jesus was crucified. But not John! He is faithful,

and he is a witness to Jesus' death. Jesus spoke to John as he stood at the foot of the cross. John tells us that: "when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved (that's John!) standing nearby, he said to his mother: "Woman, behold your son." Then he said to the disciple, "behold your mother." And then, fulfilling all Scripture, John records that Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit." Jesus' side is pierced, blood and water flow out, to show that Jesus really died. John witnessed the burial of Jesus. And He saw a whole lot more!

For on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene saw that the tomb was empty. She ran to tell Peter and John, they ran together, with John arriving first. John stooped in to look and saw the linen cloths lying there. Later Jesus appears to apostles on that night, a week later Jesus makes a special appearance for Thomas, and John was there to see it all. And he wrote it all down, saying: "these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life by His name." (20:31).

John is the one who is bearing witness to these things to us today, he is the one who is writing to us about these things, he is sharing the facts and events that he saw concerning Jesus so that you can know for certain that these things are true because not only John witnessed these things, but others

did as well. This truth moved these men and women who believe in Jesus to tell others about Jesus, even to the point that they would suffer for Jesus.

Peter was crucified upside down. Thomas was impaled by a spear. And John was sent into exile on the isle of Patmos, dying around 100 AD. But before he died, John gave to us and the Church one more witness to what he saw, the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show his servants the things that must take place before Jesus comes again. (Rev. 1:1).

You and I have witnessed many things in this past year. There have been trials and tribulations. We are still in the midst of a worldwide Pandemic and this Pandemic is leaving sickness, suffering, and death in its wake. And when this Pandemic ends, and it will end, there will continue to be more trials, tribulations, suffering and death. These are inescapable. John reminds us that throughout all of these things, we can be of good cheer for Jesus has overcome the world. John's Good News of Christmas is that in Jesus "the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. His words are trustworthy and true. So be faithful to Christ unto death, for then you will receive the crown of everlasting life

Amen