

Preaching Copy:1 John 5:9-12 “Only Two Options”

7th Sunday of Easter

Sunday, May 16th, 2021

Text: John 5:9-12

⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Exegetical Statement

Because we readily listen to and believe the world's take on truth, when the world doesn't love us and can't save us, how much more readily should we hold fast to God's testimony concerning His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, since God loves us so much, He gave that precious Son to save us? The one who continues to believe in the Gospel testimony has the Son as His Savior, and through that faith has life now and eternal life to come. But those who refuse to believe have replaced that testimony with their own personal testimony, or that of the world regarding what is truth. To believe the world or my sinful heart over God is to call God a liar, those two testimonies diametrically oppose one another. And those who call God a liar are the antichrists who are working for the Father of lies himself. These do not have life now nor eternal life to come but instead live in the death they were born into. John writes these things so that we might continue to live with the confidence that faith brings, and not fall into unbelief. To refuse God's testimony means to live in unrighteousness-live opposed to right standing with God. Living in unrighteousness is sin. But all sin has been forgiven by Jesus' death and resurrection, and that forgiveness is applied to me through repentance. But the sin that is unbelief, which is the willful turning away from God's testimony throughout life and unto death, cannot be forgiven. There is no forgiveness for dying in unbelief. We as the Church are united by the testimony from God in Christ that we hold fast to by faith. We are to pray for ourselves that we continue in a life of faith where we live out this testimony. And we are to pray for our fellow Christians, especially if they through unrepentant sin fall into unbelief.

Focus Statement:

God's testimony is the only option for truth and life. Life is found in holding by faith the Gospel testimony about His Son and His work of love for me as Lord and Savior. In Him I have forgiveness for all the times I listen to and hold fast to what the world says that opposes what my God says. His work of repentant faith keeps me trusting in Him and His testimony above all others.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know: God's testimony is the only option for life eternal.

In our lives we find comfort sitting on the fence when presented with two diametrically opposed things such as Conservative vs. Republican, U of M vs. Michigan State, spouses' food vs. mom's. In many things we can argue that things in two or more options are good. But when it comes to life truths and spiritual truths we can't hold to the testimony of the world and God at the same time. One brings life now and eternal life to come, the other brings death.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Stand fast in God's testimony I have in Scripture, that Christ is the only option for life. And not just the testimony concerning Jesus, but those other things the world wants me to sit on the fence over according to the wisdom of man.

Subject Sentence: God's testimony is the only option that gives life.

Introduction: When It's Comforting to Sit on the Fence

In this day and age, it's sometimes better to sit on the fence, to seek the middle ground against two diverse and polar opposites. But that middle ground can be hard to maintain. In a recent discussion with two friends. We started to discuss the plight of inner cities, and I mentioned a politician who had been active in bringing relief, to which one of my friends replied by castigating me for speaking well of someone who favors abortion. So I responded that I do support pro-life causes and candidates which prompted the other friend to castigate me for supporting those who steal from the poor to give to the rich. At this point they both began to go at each other. I smiled and nodded, watching both of them go at each other, talking past each other, so entrenched on one side or the other they were unable to find any middle ground.

It's not just in the realm of politics where it can be beneficial to sit on the fence. What about when your wife asks you, "Whose lasagna is better, your mother's or mine?" Because a wrong answer might either make your mother angry, or result in you being on your own for dinner, you reply "They both are very good in their own way." It's a Sunday afternoon and the husband turns the TV on saying, "What would you like to watch?" Truth be told the wife would rather watch the Hallmark Channel. But she knows this would bring a running commentary from her husband on how sappy the storyline is. So she responds "Whatever you would like to watch, knowing that means the baseball game, and a running commentary on how bad the team is, and how they've been rebuilding since 1957.

And how about taking a side on the College rivalries. At my previous job managing Hiller's Market in West Bloomfield, I quickly learned not to show support for either U of M vs. MSU since the clientele were about equally split between the two. But I was amazed to learn how deep the rivalry goes between Michigan and Ohio State. Last week during Fellowship Hour I was told that this rivalry is so bitter that cars traveling through Ohio with Michigan plates have been vandalized by exuberant Ohio State fans. Now there is a good reason to sit on the fence concerning which team is best.

There are plenty of other things it's best to sit on the fence about, which child you love more, which Christmas present you loved more, even which Pastor you love more, because when it comes to that, I'm here to tell you that no matter who you pick on that question, one of us will be having words with you after service is over today.

But when it comes to what testimony you should live your life by, John presents only two options: you either live by the testimony of God or the testimony of the unbelieving world. And you're either all in one camp or the other; there is no sitting on the fence here.

We Can't Live By Both the World's and God's Testimony

Now certainly most of us here would stand solidly with what John cites in **1 John 5:11** **And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** But what about God's testimony in Scripture that doesn't directly refer to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior? Is there wiggle room in our life of faith to except evolution as truth? Here it's good to remember that Evolution is a theory, an unproven scientific theory. To become fact scientists must be able, in the lab, to show life evolving from non-life. They must show how natural selection and mutation causes a simple one cell organism to evolve into the human life form. Until that can be shown Evolution, as much as it may make sense to the logic of the world, remains just an unproven theory. And yet it has been impressed upon me in teaching confirmation how strongly our students in public school are taught that Evolution is the only answer, and Biblical Creationism is wrong. A biology teacher insisted with one of our students that whales have human like pelvic bones that are left over vestiges from their evolving from a four-legged mammal, and that this proves evolution and disproves Creationism. But after a little bit of study on this I discovered that these so called 'pelvic type bones' are not leftover vestiges of evolution. They have a real purpose in the lives of whales today that are connected with their ability to procreate. This means that God created them with these bones for a purpose. While they may look similar to our pelvic bone, they serve a special purpose in whales, just as God designed them to.

But can't we just say that Evolution is true and still believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Yes. But the problem is that Jesus, whom we confess to be the divine Son of God, Himself gives testimony against the theory of Evolution. **Matthew 19:4** **He (Jesus) answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female"** Here Jesus cites the Creation story of Genesis Chapter One. Genesis tells us that men and woman didn't evolve over a 6-million-year period, but were created on the 6th day, as Jesus clearly attests to. So, Jesus is either telling the truth and Evolution is wrong, or Jesus is lying.

If Jesus is lying then how can we believe His declaration in **John 14:6** **Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** One could believe in Evolution and in Jesus as Lord and Savior to begin with. But can you hear the voice of the Devil at work whispering in our children's ear "Did God really say He created man and woman in a single day?" And when he's got them doubting that, he follows it up with "Did Jesus really say He was the only way to the Father? Can't Allah be the same thing for the Muslims, and Vishnu the same thing for the Hindus, and mankind's good works for the unbelievers?"

1 John 5:11-12 ¹¹ **And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son** ¹² **Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.** The Holy Spirit speaking through the Apostle John is pretty clear for the Christian, the testimony that brings us life now and eternal life to come is found only in God's Son. But what does it mean to "have the Son"? It means to believe and confess what Peter declared (Acts 4:11-12) before Jewish leaders who denied Jesus as the Christ: ¹¹ **This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.** ¹² **And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."** Jesus is **the cornerstone**, not one among many, He is the **only name under heaven**, not one among many. Did God really say it's only in Jesus we have life now and eternal life to come? YES, He did! So, you can't have it both ways, you can't believe in Jesus and still believe in Evolution because Jesus testifies against it. And You can't believe in Jesus and also believe that other gods are other people's way to the same thing, because Jesus testifies against it.

The world gives us its testimony about a lot of things through what we read, what we see on the TV and what is being taught in public education from grade school on up. It says "You can have your Jesus, as long as you listen to our testimony that same sex relationships and transgenderism is not wrong, is not a sin. But Jesus testifies to God's design intent in **Genesis 1:27-28** ²⁷ **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** ²⁸ **And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."** He created them male and female so that they might together have dominion and be fruitful and multiply. Some He created as men and some He created as women for that purpose. And He designed a man to join with a woman for that purpose. Did God really say this about the distinct purpose of two distinct genders and marriage being between a man and a woman? Yes.

God's testimony for us in **1 John 5:12** ¹² **Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.** The opposing voice in the world is that of the Devil. But the Devil doesn't care about equality for those who want to change their gender, or those who want to live in a same sex relationship. What he wants is for you and I to doubt the testimony of God concerning eternal life in His Son. He does this by chipping away at our faith in God's testimony given in the Scriptures, just as he did with Eve in the Garden. He wants to move you slowly and surely to listen to the desires of your sinful heart and the broken logic of your mind, along with the teaching of the unbelieving world, so that eventually you give up your faith in God's testimony, starting with those things that don't immediately pertain to faith in Jesus, so he can work his way to those that do. Once you give up His testimony about the Son, you no longer have life; you are spiritually dead now, with the future that is the eternity of dying in hell. That's the devil future and he knows it. He hates you and wants nothing better than for you to join him there.

You see, in what we believe about life there are only two options, either you believe God's testimony that points to life in His Son, or you believe in what the world confesses that stands opposed to God's testimony, which means you do not have life, but are living toward an eternity in dying. Once you give up the testimony of God in Christ Jesus you can never decide to go back. One who dies believing the world's testimony over God's testimony is the one who commits the unforgiveable sin that John mentions. It is the living and dying in unbelief. There is no fence sitting here, there is not an A and B option. It's one or the other. Either you believe God's testimony, or you don't Either you have life now and eternal life to come, or you don't.

God's Testimony is Greater: Comes from Greater Love

There are times that God's testimony doesn't seem to make sense. But John gives us a great reason to believe it over the world's testimony. **John 5:9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.** How ready are we to believe in what the teachers and professors say? How ready are we to believe what culture says? Yet what kind of love do they have for you? They love you as long as you agree with them. Disagree and they will call you out as bigots, make fun of you as simple fools, and try to silence you. But what about the testimony of God? Why is it greater? Because it comes with a greater love. It comes from the Father who loves you even when you refused to believe in Him. He loved you so much that while you were in your unbelief, He sent the most precious thing, His only Son. He gave Him up to suffering and death so that you could be forgiven. He rose from the dead so that you might know that through faith in Him you will not perish in everlasting hell, but on the Last Day you will be raised to everlasting life, just as Jesus was on Easter Sunday.

Repentant Faith Keeps God's Testimony Your Only Option

How great is that love that God the Father has for you? When you listen too closely to the testimony of the world and begin to live according to it, threatening to cast aside the new life of faith His Son died and rose again to give you, instead of allowing you to fall away He sends His Spirit. The Spirit points you to all the ways you are compromising your faith in the testimony of Christ so that you might turn from the unbelief you are sliding into and turn back to Him. You are being called back by the Spirit working through God's Word and Sacraments. It's not what you deserve. It's the gracious gift that He keeps giving you just as promised to you in your baptism. He made you His own and He is at work to keep you that way.

God testifies in **1 John 5:10** **Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.** As the gracious gift of your baptism, you have that testimony concerning the Son of God within you which is the faith planted and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Whenever you choose to defy what God has instructed and commanded in His Word, you make God out to be liar. You say, "My way and my desire is what's best for me, and contrary to what you say in Scripture God, Your way is not." That is sin, and sin makes us deserving of eternal death. And when we become those who call God a liar, we find ourselves working for the Father of All Lies, that serpent from the Garden, Satan Himself. But the Spirit points out that sin, so that we recognize it for what it is: disobeying God and calling Him a liar. Then He points us to the testimony concerning the One who died to forgive all sin, the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has life within Himself and grants us renewed life through our repentance. He points us back to the one and only option in which we have life; faith in Jesus Christ, and a life lived out in repentant faith toward Him.

Conclusion

In our life lived out in this world, in the name of brotherly love, it is sometimes commendable to sit on the fence. But when it comes to our life lived out in faith, when it comes to the testimony that gives life vs. the one that brings death there can be no fence sitting. In this world there are only two options: you can live by the world's testimony that Evolution explains life, that there are many roads leading to heaven, and all lifestyles are permissible. It will make you a lot of friends in the world, but it leads to eternal condemnation. Or you live your life believing the testimony that brings life now and eternal life to come. That testimony comes with the power from God called faith that gives to you Jesus, and all He has earned for you: life now and eternal life to come. It's the testimony born out of love for you, love for one another, and love for the lost who confess with the world. It's the testimony that forgives all the times we've called God a liar. And not just for us, but for all who believe. Amen.