

AN INVASION PLAN TO CONQUER AND SAVE
I. The Sword of the Spirit – God’s Word
II. Fighting on a Foreign Field
III. Where Victory Gives Comfort to the Vanquished
John 15:26-16:4

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2020 | EASTER

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

<i>Old Testament</i>	Ezekiel 36:24–28
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 27
<i>New Testament</i>	1 Peter 4:7–11
<i>Gospel</i>	John 15:26–16:4

ELH # 389 vv. 1-2, 6-7 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

ELH #20 Holy Ghost, Dispel Our Sadness

Rev. Edward Bryant
Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches
Medford & Grants Pass, OR

John 15:26–16:4 (CSB)

²⁶ “When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

¹⁶ “I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling. ² They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ They will do these things because they haven’t known the Father or me. ⁴ But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you will remember I told them to you. I didn’t tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you.

Dear fellow redeemed: By now you have probably caught onto the fact that leading up to His crucifixion, Jesus was briefing His disciples, NOT about how they were to deal with the effects of his life, ministry, crucifixion and death, but how they were to live in view of His resurrection. We remember great men all the time and consider how Jefferson gave us the Declaration of Independence, Madison the Constitution, and Washington, the precedents that gave them life. But they have no further effect. We say, “They must be turning over in their graves,” for this is or that reason, but they aren’t. They are dead and gone and out of the picture.

But our Lord is Risen. Thursday was the anniversary of His ascension into heaven where the Father “... **subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church,**” (Ephesians 1:22, CSB)

So, what he says here is for the “after ascension” part of His relationship with the disciples – and us. Here He tells them that they will engage the world so powerfully as to provoke physical attacks – just by testifying about Jesus. By speaking the gospel, the powerful word of God, the Holy Spirit is going to go into the world in conquest.

You could almost call this an invasion plan. It isn’t an invasion plan to conquer and destroy, but rather

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I. The Sword of the Spirit – God’s Word

At this moment, throughout the world, the Holy Spirit is testifying about Christ. The gospel isn’t just some fluffy “spiritual” speculation; it is rooted in reality. It includes the actual testimony of the people who were witnesses from the beginning of what Jesus did to save us.

The Spirit and those who teach his word invade a world that is always peopled by unbelievers – souls born in spiritual darkness and death, not knowing God and alienated from Him. The offensive weapon for this is the Word of God, as Paul wrote, “**Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit—which is the word of God.**” (Ephesians 6:17, CSB) Just as importantly, the apostle Paul wrote by inspiration, “**[The gospel] is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...**” (Romans 1:16, CSB)

This word is true information, rooted in the reality of what Christ did at a certain place and a certain time, but it is not just information, it is a living power. The gospel not only talks about forgiveness, it gives forgiveness and works the new spiritual life that is saving faith.

As our text teaches here, God the Holy Spirit accompanies this Gospel with His power to call you to faith, to awaken your dead, blind, sinful heart, so that you have come to trust in this Jesus for life eternal, even in the hour of your death. ²⁶ **“When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.**

II. Fighting on a Foreign Field

Our Savior is inserting Himself into this world as He has over and over again. We think of the time He revealed Himself to Noah or Abraham or Moses or King David, or the prophets. We see how He entered into human history at those times and others, climaxing in His own incarnation and birth to Mary, and His life, death, and resurrection. But He is still doing that: **the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.**

Today is no different. He has told us that He will bring judgment on this world, so that our only hope is in Him, and that hope is proclaimed through the gospel. We hear people quibbling over whether deaths are counted “properly” as “COVID-19 deaths” for one purpose or another, but does that make a difference to the dead? The only thing that makes a difference for them is whether they have come to saving faith in Christ. We testify to the salvation we have in Christ.

But when truth invades the world built on a lie, when life invades a world that worships death, when the true Savior invades the kingdom of this world, the Prince of This World will fight back. It is like we are an invading force fighting on a foreign field.

So Jesus warns, **16 “I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling. ² They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ They will do these things because they haven’t known the Father or me. ⁴ But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you will remember I told them to you. I didn’t tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you.**

You might think that speaking of the hope that we have in Christ, we would be welcomed with open arms by those whose hopes of an earthly paradise have been dashed. You would think that the message of eternal life would bring joy to a human race that is dying. You would think that the news of forgiveness and reconciliation with God, our Judge, would bring peace and joy to people who cannot bear the judgments they dish out to others.

You would be wrong.

Because humanity is fallen, and human culture is bound up with death and hatred exaltation of self, the Christian gospel will always be counter-cultural. . **³They will do these things [oppose Christ, the gospel, and forgiveness, and will persecute Christians] because they haven’t known the Father or me.**

III. Where Victory Gives Comfort to the Vanquished

You must realize that you are at odds with the world. Sadly, a lot of Christians think that they must attract the unbelieving world to the church by saying what pleases the world. They are devastated to find they are not acceptable to society (banned from the synagogues). It is not just because of our stands on morality – sanctity of life, sanctity of marriage, creation, headship in marriage and family, etc. It is because of the gospel itself.

We are the sworn enemies of the unbelieving world, as John wrote Jesus' word, "***Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.***" (1 John 2:15–17, CSB)

So we do not make peace with this world, we conquer it. Now you may have thoughts there of power and might brought to bear to create the kingdom of God. Or you might look forward to the victorious Day of the Lord in which all will rise from the grave and submit to Him, "***For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.***" (Romans 14:11–12, CSB)

But that is not this invasion, this spiritual war, or this battle fought in this age of the world. How do we conquer the world when we are objects of persecution, can only testify to the truth, and are at odds with what this world wants? John answers that also: "***because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?***" (1 John 5:4–5, CSB)

So while we warn the world of condemnation, we do not conquer them by destroying them, but by saving them from condemnation. We make clear to the world that anyone without perfect righteousness is damned, but we conquer them not by damning them, but by declaring and giving the perfect righteousness that we have in Christ. We declare before the world that those who do not believe are lost and enemies of God, but then we speak the words of hope that ignite faith and bring from death to life.

This is how you and I were conquered, defeated, and vanquished. Born as unbelievers, spiritually dead, we have been born to a new and spiritual life of faith through the good news declaring Christ to us as Savior.

Putting it another way, in this invasion of the world, God conquers, not to destroy us, but to make us His own dear children.

So let us live our lives, rejoicing in the victory that was won over us, to save us. May we see ourselves as part of an invading force of the living in the midst of a dying world, proclaiming that even when we suffer the death of the body, we live in the resurrection.

AMEN.