

## John 12:27-36 - "Sons of Light Tell It Like It Is"

### John Henry Koppes' Funeral Sermon

Our sermon text for today's funeral service for John Henry Koppes is from the Gospel according to the Apostle John, which ends with these words: "*While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.*" John Koppes was not only a brother, husband, father, grandfather, and a son to his parents, Virgil and Betty Jean, he was also a "*son of light*" through Jesus Christ, "*the light of the world*" (John 8:12). As a "*son of light*," John usually didn't hesitate to shine the light of Christ, or to tell it like it is when it comes to God's only way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

And John let me know before his death that he wanted me to also tell it like it is in today's sermon, since he knew that there would be some here today who not only want to let the family know that they're sorry for their loss but who also want to be comforted by God's Word of truth. But he also knew that there may be some here today who simply want to let the family know that they're sorry for their loss, or to share some happy memories about John. The truth is that no matter why we're here, our salvation, like John's, depends on our continual hearing of God's message of salvation through Jesus Christ, which is why we can also rejoice with John who is, without a doubt, with the Lord of eternal light now and forever.

This is the confidence that John and all Christians have because we, by the grace of God, know and believe not only that we are spiritually poor sinners who cannot save ourselves by what we do, but that God, who created us, sent His only Son into our flesh so that He, in Jesus Christ, could die in our place for our sins. Through His death, Jesus fulfilled God's righteous judgement against our sins, which is death.

That's why Jesus said in our text, "*Now is my soul troubled.*" His soul was troubled partly because He was not looking forward to the suffering and damning death He had come to go through for all people. But at the same time He was looking forward to fulfilling His heavenly Father's will for Him. That's why He also said, "*And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I come to this hour* [referring to the hour of His suffering and death]. *Father, glorify your name.*"

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's name was glorified through Jesus because He was "*obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*" (Philippians 2:8). Through Jesus' death we are shown not only the death we deserve because of our sins, which rejects God and His will for our lives, but we are also shown how much God still loves us sinners. For, He didn't wait for us to, first, repent of our sins and seek His mercy and forgiveness, instead, "*God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

Through this Law and Gospel message of the cross, that *“the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23), God works to create a faith in our heart which is glad to repent of our sins and trust in His forgiveness so that we don’t end up suffering a similar death from which we cannot be set free.

But, like Jesus’ first disciples, we wouldn’t believe all this if Jesus had not risen from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection assures us not only that He is God, who is more powerful than our sins, death and the devil, but also that the full price of our sins has been paid and that we will live with Him forever. This was John’s confident hope especially after he married Bobbi and eventually became a Lutheran Christian. When John learned from the Bible that his salvation was not dependent upon any good works on his part, but was solely and completely dependent upon the work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the light that Jesus spoke of shone so brightly in John’s life that he didn’t want to keep it hidden.

But at the same time it wasn’t easy for John to keep on believing and sharing this Good News in the midst of people who rejected it; or to keep on believing and sharing this Good News in the midst of the pain and suffering that he especially felt during the last year of his life in this world. That’s why one of John’s favorite sayings was, “Hard to be strong, easy to be weak.” That’s also why John regularly took advantage of Jesus’ promise to keep his faith in Him alive through His Word and the Sacrament of His true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. John recognized that he was weak but that God is strong. And God, through His Word and Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which I was privileged to give to John during the last week of his life on this earth, kept John in the true faith to life everlasting.

Now, of course, none of us have to believe any of what God tells us in the Bible or even that the Bible is God’s Word. Instead, we can choose to believe in a god of our own making who is happy with whatever excuses we use to distance ourselves from Christ’s presence with us today through His Word and Sacraments, and from His eternal presence in the future. But John would like to be with all of us again, this time in a world without all the annoying effects of his sins and ours.

This is also God’s desire for all of us, which is why He not only created us, died and rose again to save us, and works through His Word and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to give us faith in this Good News, but He also continues to work through His Word and the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to keep us walking in the way of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ *“while [we] have the light, lest darkness overtake [us].”*

All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.