

You are my Witnesses

Luke 24:44-53

LWML Sunday 2013



A Sermon for LWML Sunday 2013 based on St. Luke 24:44-53

In the Name of Jesus

You are my witnesses, Jesus says. Christ is the faithful witness as His life is a confession of the true faith that reveals our compassionate Father's ever-giving heart. A witness to Christ confesses the true faith. By the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, our LORD has called us His witnesses as people who share what He has given to us so that all would know the Father's saving love. *You are my witnesses*, then, is Christ's call to our real identity for the true confession of the faith in words and actions that inspire works of mercy in our life together.

Christ Jesus our LORD speaks to us so that we are His witnesses.

In today's Gospel, Jesus the faithful witness spoke to His disciples so that they could understand the Holy Scriptures He fulfilled. He tells them why He came into the world, namely to suffer, die and rise from the dead to save us from sin, death and the devil. He sends His Holy Spirit so that His people may be witnesses as repentance and forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all nations. *You are my witnesses*, Christ says to His disciples.

Christ Jesus our LORD speaks to us today. He raises up pastors to preach the Word in season and out of season. *How are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?* as the holy apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome. Pastors are sent by God to preach and teach the Law, proclaiming what God expects of His people according to His divine goodness. That Word of Law shows us our sin, our blatant and rebellious disregard for Christ's life and teaching and our ego-driven rejection of His promises. It shows how deaf we are to Christ's compassionate voice of forgiveness, life and salvation as we reject our identity as His witnesses. Thankfully, though, our LORD raises up pastors who also proclaim the Gospel to us that releases us from the vale of sin and death and brings the peace of God that passes all understanding to us. The Good News that Christ came into the world as the great witness to the Father's abounding love to suffer and die for our sin and rise again so that we may live releases us from the bondage of suffering and death. As repentance and forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in His Name, the promised Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify people in the one true faith. Commissioned servants also work in our church body as teachers, deaconesses, directors of education, parish music, nurses and others witnessing the living Christ. The Word—who is Christ—is shared so that God's people may embrace their true identity in His grace. *You are my witnesses*, Christ says to us today.

Christ Jesus has spoken to the women of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League so that they may be His Lutheran Women in Mission. Throughout the ages, the *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* has included Bible studies that have been used by people all over the world. Through the Word, our LORD engages people for lives of witnessing. Stories of faith in those pages of the *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* exhibit the mutual conversation and consolation of the saints that we believe, teach, and confess in the Smalcald Articles of our Lutheran Confessions. Mustard Seed devotions from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League left in hotel rooms, restaurants and greeting cards show how the witness of Christ continues to permeate the world. *You are my witnesses*, Christ says through His servants in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

Christ not only speaks to us so that we are His witnesses; Christ leads us out so that we are His witnesses.

He does not send His people where He Himself has not gone. In today's Gospel, He led His disciples out to Bethany. Previously, He led them out of their previous vocations to follow Him. He led His disciples out of slavery into freedom as He leads His people out of death into life. He does this saving work as He died on the cross for our sin

and rose from the dead so that we may live as His witnesses. As Christ leads out His disciples, He proclaims, *You are my witnesses*.

Christ continues to lead His Church out so that we may be His witnesses. He does this when He brings us to the waters of Holy Baptism where we die to our sin and rise to newness of life. Buried with Him in our baptism, we are united with Him in His resurrection witness. As He gathers His people at His altar to receive His precious Body and Blood, Christ leads His people out from the altar into the world. As the Divine Service concludes inside the church building, divine service continues in the world as the people of God are sent forth as witnesses. There is no need to fear; the resurrected Christ has gone before us to prepare the way for us. As Christ leads us out into the world, He lovingly comforts us saying, *You are my witnesses*.

Christ has led the Lutheran Women's Missionary League out to be Lutheran Women in Mission. The pledge of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League is centered in Christ's initiative. "In fervent gratitude for the Savior's dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption we dedicate ourselves to Him with all that we are and have; and in obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields, we pledge Him our willing service wherever and whenever He has need of us. We consecrate to our Savior our hands to work for Him, our feet to go on His errands, our voice to sing His praises, our lips to proclaim His redeeming love, our silver and our gold to extend His Kingdom, our will to do His will, and every power of our life to the great task of bringing the lost and the erring into eternal fellowship with Him. Amen." Christ Jesus was the One sent by the Father as the great witness to love and the people of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, respond by witnessing to Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit given in the Means of the Spirit, Christ has led Lutheran Women in Mission out from their individual homes and local congregations to cities and countries far away. *Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all the peoples*, as we chanted in the Psalm today. With money collected in mites, the women of the Lutheran Women Missionary League have been led out by Christ to every continent on earth sharing His redeeming love as they have heard the voice of Christ saying, *You are my witnesses*.

Christ speaks to us and leads us as His witnesses and Christ blesses us to be His witnesses.

He opened His hands and blessed His disciples in today's Gospel as He sent them witnessing His death and resurrection. Eventually, they would share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with countless people as day by day more were added to those who were saved.

Even today, Christ opens His nail-pierced hands in love to satisfy the desire of every living thing as He blesses us for His service in the world through our various vocations. He opens His hands to give us His life-giving Body and Blood as He opens His hands to bless us and keep us, giving us peace. Receiving the Blessed Sacraments, we have been blessed with forgiveness, life, and salvation to share the truth of His all-atoning love as His witnesses in the world. Today, we especially celebrate how Christ blesses the Lutheran Women's Missionary League to be Lutheran Women in Mission. We celebrate God's goodness shown to us in Jesus Christ by celebrating witness, mercy, and life together in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and many others have been blessed through the hands of women who have shared the gifts that God has given for the extension of His Kingdom as congregations have been founded, schools have been supported, outreach centers have been funded, and lives have been transformed as Lutheran Women in Mission have confessed the truth of the Gospel by bearing witness to Christ. By His amazing and extravagant grace, human hands bring divine grace to others. *As a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, a royal diadem in the hand of [our] God*, as Isaiah the prophet reminded us earlier, the witness of God's people brings hope to the nations as we are His witnesses. It begins in worship as Christ comes to us to speak to us, lead us out, and bless us, just as He did His disciples in today's Gospel. It continues in worship as Christ speaks through us, leads through us, and blesses others through us. And it will culminate in endless worship as we look to the Day of His return when we who have been spoken to by Christ and who have been led out by Him are blessed to be raised from the dead and in our flesh to live in the joy of being His people forever. *You are my witnesses*, Christ our LORD says. Confessing the truth in love and serving the LORD with gladness, we rejoice that Christ speaks to us, leads us out and blesses us as He graciously entrusts us with the Gospel in our ears, eyes, hands, and mouths saying, *You are my witnesses*. Soli Deo Gloria