

January 11 Worship
Readers- Aaron, Sophie Hopkins

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.”* John 1:8

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Opening Scripture- Psalm 29(page 478-479)

Opening Chorus- 485- Come To The Water

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

People: Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

Leader: The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever.

People: The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.

Hymn of Praise- 331- The Church's One Foundation

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- God of grace and mercy, open the eyes of the blind, breathe life into the dead, release those bound by sin and Satan, and, through your Holy Spirit's power, may hearts be challenged, minds convinced and wills conquered. In the name of Jesus the Lord, who taught us to pray, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.
Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Isaiah 42:1-9(page 622)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 3:13-17(page 837)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 295- Spirit Of God Descend Upon My heart(vs 1,2,5)

New Testament Scripture- Acts 10:34-43(page 957-958)

Message

“Are We A Reliable Witness?”

What does it mean to be a witness? The word, witness, can be either a noun or a verb. As a noun, it means; one that gives evidence, or one who has personal knowledge of something. As a verb, it means; to testify to, or to furnish proof of what we believe to be true. In order to be an effective witness for anything, we need to make sure that we are testifying to what we truly believe to be factual. It is very important that whatever we claim as truth be something that we can support with conviction and faith. Having opinions about certain things is just fine but if we are to be reliable, we must be able to show others why we believe.

In today's gospel lesson, we read about John, Jesus' cousin, who has been preaching about the coming of the prophesied Messiah. When Jesus came to John to be baptized, John tried to claim that it should be Jesus who baptized John, not the other way around. Why was it necessary for John to baptize Jesus? The prophesy's required that the Messiah be received by the prophet to show that He was there. John had to be the witness to Jesus' receiving the Holy Spirit. It would be through John's testimony that the disciples were drawn to Jesus.

Christian witnessing is an essential aspect of faith that involves sharing personal beliefs, experiences, and the teachings of Jesus Christ with others. It serves as a means of expressing one's faith and providing evidence of God's work in the world. At its core, witnessing is about an authentic relationship with Jesus and is not merely a set of verbal declarations but a lifestyle that reflects the love, grace, and truth of the Christian faith. Witnessing has its roots deeply embedded in the Bible. The Great Commission, found in Matthew 28:19-20, underscores the importance of sharing the Gospel. Jesus commanded His followers to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” emphasizing both the responsibility and privilege of sharing faith. This directive is not limited to preaching in grand gatherings but includes everyday conversations, acts of kindness, and living out one's faith in practical ways.

Christian witnessing can take numerous forms, depending on context and individual personality. One of the most prominent is personal testimony. This involves sharing one's own story of how faith in Christ has transformed their life, providing a relatable and genuine account of God's goodness. Personal testimonies have the power to resonate deeply with others, often opening doors for meaningful conversations about faith. Another common approach is relational witnessing, which focuses on building genuine relationships with others. By demonstrating Christ's love through actions, such as kindness, service, and support, Christians can create authentic connections that pave the way for discussions about faith. This method emphasizes that witnessing is not merely about conversion but rather about nurturing relationships based on trust and respect. A witness in the biblical sense is someone who has experienced the reality of Christ and can testify to His work in their life.

Being a reliable witness of Christ requires certain actions on our part. We must be sure that the theme of our witness is Jesus Christ, His death, burial and resurrection. If we aren't explaining the sacrifice of Christ, then we're not really sharing the gospel. It is not enough to merely tell the stories about Jesus and His miracles and teachings. These stories are important but without proclaiming His rising from the grave, Jesus is just another prophet.

The power of our witness is the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who transforms a life, and a transformed life is evident to all. As we witness, we should spend much time in prayer, appropriating the Spirit's power so that we are enabled to let our light shine in such a way that others will recognize the power of God in us. In order to truly give witness to our faith, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us as we interact with those who may not believe as we do. People can see when the Spirit shines in us and may respond by asking just what is powering us.

The validity of our witness will be shown in how we live our lives. The effective Christian witness will live his/her life above reproach in the power of the Holy Spirit, whose fruit we exhibit when we remain in Christ. Living our lives as Christ would have us do can often be quite difficult. It is so easy to let ourselves fall into worldly reactions to what life throws at us. Living the perfect life is not completely possible but we can do the best we can and be willing to accept and admit lapses in our behavior. Showing humility and taking responsibility for our shortcomings is just another way of witnessing to God's gift of forgiveness.

As Christians, the two things we can do to stand up for Christ are to live according to His Word and grow our own knowledge of Him. Christ said, "Let your light shine before men." (Matthew 5:16). This means that we should live and act in a way that supports the gospel. We should also arm ourselves with knowledge, both of the gospel and of the world around us. 1st Peter 3:15 says; "But in your hearts set

apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” All we can do is live and teach as Christ would and let Him take care of the rest. Critics of Christianity seem to have become more vocal recently. This is partly because there are many people who do not believe in God or understand the truth about Him at all. It also is because it has become far easier to proclaim their opinions through the proliferation of available media. Yet the apparent increase of anti-Christians is also due to perception. As with many topics, those who truly despise Christianity are the loudest and most vocal of the non-believers. The vast majority of those who do not believe don’t care enough to bother believers. The few angry, vocal, bitter unbelievers make enough noise to seem more numerous than they are.

It is important for us to realize that we cannot force our beliefs on anyone who does not want to hear it. It is not our job to make people follow Christ. That is for the Holy Spirit to do. We are supposed to live in a way that shows what it means to be Christian. We are to show the world, not tell the world. These days, it is harder to express your faith since so many people want to turn opinions into confrontation. Remember what Jesus says about loving those who may not agree with you. Showing that we can lead is much more effective than trying to push others. Have you ever tried to push a car up a hill with a rope? Do not take offense if someone attempts to denigrate your faith. Remember what it says in Romans 14:1; “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for dispute over opinions.” Each of us has the God given right to believe as we wish. This right comes with a responsibility to allow others to believe as they wish. Live your faith as God and the Holy Spirit lead you. Those people that you witness to will see, through you, what God does for those who are faithful. Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- God who shows no partiality, show your favoritism on all your people. Send forth your justice for all to see. Save us your people. Empower us to preach and testify to your great love and mercy. God who makes and keeps covenant with your people, You called us to be a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to set the prisoners free, Help us to answer your call that these things come to pass. God of grace and glory, We pray for those who suffer from pains and sorrows. We pray for those whose hearts are broken. We pray for those whose families are fractured. We pray for those whose lives are ravaged by war. We pray for those who struggle with poverty, and starvation We pray for our brother and sisters in Christ who are being martyred and tortured for their beliefs. Thank you for hearing our prayers. Thank you for pouring out your Spirit on your son and pouring your spirit out on us too. May we too hear you say to us this day that “This

is my son, my daughter, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” In the name of Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen

Closing Hymn- 419- Children Of The Heavenly Father(vs 1,3,5)

Benediction- Go now as a light to the nations. Honor the Lord; preach what you know of the risen Christ, and fulfill all righteousness. And may God strengthen you and bless you with peace; May Christ Jesus bring forth justice for you and among you; And may the Holy Spirit alight on you and affirm you as God’s beloved ones. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, In the name of Christ. Amen.