

TEXT: John 16:8-10

THEME: Witness Confidently!

1. He Masterfully Presents the Evidence of Sin
2. He Masterfully Presents the Evidence of Righteousness

Dear Christian Friends:

Many Christians tense up at the very mention of sharing their faith. There are numerous reasons why this is so—why we are uneasy in sharing with others the wonderful news that Jesus paid for all our sins. There is fear—fear of not knowing what to say, fear of rejection and ridicule, or even fear of being labeled a zealot or “Jesus freak.” But the greatest reason we are uneasy is because we forget that we are not alone and that our witnessing is God’s work, work he is doing through us.

Through the Word of God that we share with others, the Holy Spirit brings people to saving faith. But that doesn’t always happen. The Holy Spirit convicts the world, but that doesn’t mean he will always convince it. God’s Word is like the sun. At the same time it softens wax, it hardens clay. Or as St. Paul wrote, **“To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life” (2 Corinthians 2:16).**

In our text, Jesus mentions three things of which the Holy Spirit convicts the world. Jesus says of the Holy Spirit, **“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me” (John 16:8-9).** Let’s look more closely at the first of those things, namely, sin. As the Counselor, the Holy Spirit MASTERFULLY PRESENTS THE EVIDENCE THAT THE WORLD IS GUILTY OF SIN. His tool is God’s law. As he cites one command after another, the evidence piles up and becomes indisputable. **“Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God” (Romans 3:19).**

However, this does not mean that everyone will turn to the Lord for help. Some will; some won’t. But no one will turn to God until they see their guilt. Only people who know they are drowning will cry for help.

Of course, modern American Christianity does not like to hear this. Modern American Christianity says only, “Jesus loves me, this I know...and I don’t want to know anything else.” It then selfishly uses the love of Jesus as an excuse, a reason, for sin.

That is why it is vitally important that we share not only God’s incredible grace that saved us and gives us eternal life in heaven through faith in Jesus, but also the fact that all people are sinners and liable to punishment under God’s awesome wrath. We need to show that there are no misdemeanors when it comes to sin—that every sin is not just a felony, much less a misdemeanor—every sin is no less than a capital crime. That’s because every sin is a sin against God. A person can throw a punch at a friend and it is bad. But if he punches the president, it has vastly different consequences. Every sin is so serious because it is an affront to the righteous and holy God. That is something most people don’t see. Every person who dares to say, “Well, I am a pretty good person,” doesn’t see the seriousness of sin. Most consider only a huge sin to be serious. Therefore, with our friends, relatives,

associates, and neighbors, we need to talk about sin's seriousness. We need to talk to people about hell. Only then will people cry out for help.

Of course, that is not politically correct. But as you do that, don't forget that the Holy Spirit is doing his work through you.

What do you think upsets non-Christians the most when we share our faith with them? You might think it is the accusation that they are sinners. There is no denying that upsets some. But from my experience, that isn't the worst. When I started a church from scratch, I talked with a lot of non-Christians and what was most upsetting to unbelievers is the teaching that there is only one way to heaven and that it's not through any goodness we can produce. Rather, it is through the righteousness that is found only in Jesus Christ. The world's anger at such a teaching should not surprise us, seeing that we live in an age that vilifies most forms of exclusiveness. Many see the Bible teaching that Jesus is the only way to heaven as nothing but an ugly remnant of unenlightened times.

That's what Jesus meant when he said that the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, would also convict the world in regard to righteousness. **"In regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer" (John 16:10).** One of the main pieces of evidence that the Holy Spirit presents in the courtroom of this world is that a person can only be righteous (right with God) through Christ. Because of sin, no person can attain their own righteousness. To be righteous, they need to receive righteousness from somewhere else—somewhere outside of themselves.

The only person who can give them that righteousness is Jesus. He has proved that claim by ascending to his Father. Jesus' Father has accepted him and him alone. Why? Because Jesus' life and death is the only righteousness he will accept. Many prophets have claimed to offer people a source of righteousness. But God the Father has put his stamp of approval on Jesus' righteousness alone. By seating Jesus at his right hand, the Father sends a clear message that Jesus is the one—the only one. Only in Jesus can anyone be righteous—right with God.

This message is to be at the heart of all of our witnessing. But frequently, our witnessing gets shifted off center. We major on the minors. We invite people to come to our church because it is friendly. We highlight our conservative stand on moral issues. We emphasize the programs we have for our members. But we don't always talk about the fact that Jesus is the only way to be right with God...and that this is what we teach, preach, and practice here at Trinity.

May your witness always be Christ-centered and not church-centered. We want you to invite people to come to our Festival of Friendship and our outdoor worship service and picnic at Roosevelt Park on June 22nd. We want a great turnout. But not to say we had 400 people in the park for our event, but to say that we got to share Jesus as the only way to be right with God with 400 people that day. As we share a Christ-centered witness, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of righteousness. He will lead people to realize that their only hope is in Jesus, the one who ascended to the Father. Amen.