

October 6, 2013
LWML Sunday

LWML Sunday file
(Series C)

St. Luke 24:48

(Jesus said): "You are (my) witnesses of these things."

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

Please stand. *(pause)* Raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God? *(allow response)* Please be seated. *(pause)*

I have an announcement! Everything written about the messiah, the Savior sent by God to save us from our sins, recorded by Moses in the books of Law, by the ancient Prophets, and in the Holy Writings beginning with the Israelite hymnal called the Psalms is absolutely true! (v. 44) Listen to the inspired Word and believe. Soak this up like a sponge. Everything in the Holy Scriptures points to one person – Christ the Son of God (v. 45). And here are the highlights -- Christ will suffer and die on the cross as the perfect Lamb of God for the sins of the whole world; then on the third day he will rise from the dead (v. 46). Now, your mission is to testify by the way you think, talk, and treat others that you know this truth. The adventure of a lifetime begins with repentance and the forgiveness of sins with your testimony. Jesus said it would be this way --

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES.

In thirty seconds we'll testify and verify that it is true.

Look at your neighbor. As difficult as this may be to accept, that person is just as much a part of the truth as you are. In fact, that person tells the truth as much as you do. Both of you are redeemed in Christ. You have the same future. You will inherit everything in the vast kingdom of God prepared for believers. Now, let's put this truth to the test. Turn to your neighbor. *(pause)* Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about why you are here. Why do you go to church? Take turns. Tell each other why you have come here. *(thirty seconds)*

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES.

Serving the Lord with gladness is never automatic. We need to learn by taking baby steps into forever. Growing spiritually can be uncomfortable, painfully slow, and even a bit embarrassing at times. Perhaps the last thirty seconds was such a time. What if it was your last thirty seconds? What if your neighbor was not a Christian? What if you were the only messenger of truth in a world of lies? Would you be more comfortable doing nothing? If Jesus never intended to include you in his plan to share the Gospel and build his church, then why did he say --

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES (?)

Some people exclude themselves. They deny the existence of a loving, forgiving God who cared enough to send his very best in the person of Christ. They insist that there is absolutely no truth -- that is, no absolute truth -- call it Gospel or good news, it doesn't matter to them because they choose to live their lives their own way. Maybe you know somebody outside the truth. Perhaps you've been there, too.

Ready for another announcement?

We've all been there.

Aunt Sophie, a converted salesperson at *Walmart*, was always eager to tell the truth because the Gospel of Jesus Christ meant everything to her. One day she was seen talking about Christ to a wooden Indian outside a tobacco store at the shopping mall. People thought she was blind and dumb. She heard what was said and responded to her critics, "Some say I was talking about Christ to a wooden Indian. That may be so. My eyes ain't so good no more. But one thing's for sure -- what I did ain't nearly as bad as being a wooden Christian and talking about Christ to nobody."

We need to start somewhere. This text is a good place. Jesus said ...

"You are (my) witnesses of these things."

The (Gk: *touton*) *these things* are crucial to our testimony. It's not enough to simply wrap our minds around the events of the Gospel, the words of eternal life must be on the tip of our tongues. And our actions that speak louder, must be in step with the will of God as we see it revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Taking the first steps are always the hardest ones.

When I was little my mother took me to meetings of the World Friendship Circle, which in our church was part of the LWML. At that time I didn't know how important their work was. The ladies worked on quilts, special gifts, and crafts for people all over the world. They made care packages for men and women in the armed forces. They said prayers for the sick, the shut-in, and the strangers in society. But the thing I remember the most was not the spread of the Gospel, but the spread of food they put out for lunch. As a growing boy most of my "first steps into forever" happened on their watch.

My first thoughts about prayer.

My first Bible.

My first friend in Christ even now after sixty years.

My first look at the pastor wearing a regular clothes.

My first questions about the needs of others.

My first embrace from somebody other than my mother who cared about me.

My first touchdown pass on the church front lawn.

My first exposure to older people who believed in Christ.

My first taste of potato salad.

My first look at gray hair on a lady who was growing older.

My first close-up view of wrinkles on the human face.

My first hospital call.

My first funeral.

My first experience of community and serving Christ, who said --

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES.

As I look at you today only the names have changed. I see the same warmth, winning smiles, and witnesses for Christ. It is a privilege not only to be here, but to be included in the community we call St. Paul's Lutheran Church ...

- where we gather together in the name of our crucified and risen Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ,
- where we learn how to serve the Lord with gladness,
- where we grow spiritually through the Word and Sacrament ministry of his church,
- where we make the most of every service opportunity set before us, including the thirty-second test,
- where we hear Jesus say as he does in this text --
YOU ARE MY WITNESSES.

Go, then and tell the story
To those who need it still;
Go then and give a witness --
This is your Father's will.
Go and may God go with you
And give you power divine,
That he may say to others,
"Son, daughter, thou art mine."

Paul Foust, Michigan District 1988

Go and tell the truth.

In Jesus' Name,
A M E N

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