

*Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*

*1 Timothy 1:2 ...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*My sermon today is based on our Gospel lesson – Matthew 11:2-11*

## **“New World Order”**

### **Introduction: New World Order**

The phrase “New World Order” has been floating around in the media for generations. President George Herbert Walker Bush used it to describe the world after the fall of the Soviet Union. Science fiction writer H.G. Wells published a book called “The New World Order” in 1940. (He hoped a new, benevolent world government would rise from the ashes of World War 2.)

In Christian circles, the phrase takes on a more sinister tone. Some Christians are afraid that there will be a one world government and that it will start to persecute people who hold traditional Christian beliefs. The authors of the Left Behind series have made millions by attempting to foretell what life will be like under the New World Order.

### **Old World Order**

The idea of Christians being imprisoned resonates with us because we have seen it before. In fact, we see it in today’s Gospel lesson. John is in prison because he said that King Herod should not have married Herodias, his brother’s wife. He was later beheaded after the dance of Herodias’ daughter, Salome.

John the Baptist is often called the last of the Old Testament prophets even though he appears in the New Testament. Like many of the Old Testament prophets, he is killed for his faith.

Of course this persecution didn't end with John the Baptist, it continues with the stoning of Stephen who is normally considered the first Christian martyr. After that, most of Jesus' closest followers would be killed for their faith.

Because Christians know that we were persecuted in the past, we are concerned that it may occur in the future. The Roman Empire seemed like a world-wide empire to the people of that time and many Christians suspect trouble if there is another world-wide empire in the future. What many Christians fail to realize is that we are already living in a world that is hostile to us. John the Evangelist tells us:

1 John 3:13 Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

### **The World Hates Christ**

The world hates us because the world hates Christ. When I speak of the world, I am not speaking of creation which God created as good and which Christ redeemed on the cross. The world is shorthand for the power of Satan that has been given temporary authority to rule the earth.

When Jesus began his ministry, he confronted this power head on. He went to the desert where he could meet with Satan face to face. There the devil tempted him by telling him that he could have all the kingdoms of the world if he would just bow down. Jesus did not dispute that the devil had authority over this world. He refused to worship Satan but he did not deny his authority.

Satan hates the fact that Jesus came to earth because he knows it is the beginning of his end as ruler of this world. Satan's power to drag people into hell was destroyed on the cross but he will still lash out whenever he can against the bodies, reputations and property of Christians. He will do everything he can to stop the spread of the Gospel.

If it takes all-out persecution to stop Christians from sharing the Gospel, Satan will do that. But most of the time he will work in more subtle ways. If he can get Christians to be quiet because it is un-cool to be Christian, that is good enough.

### **Christ Overcomes the World**

With all this talk about the powers of this world, it is easy to become discouraged. That is why Jesus gave his disciples these words of hope:

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus overcame the world on the cross. There he took Satan's authority away from him. The devil is no longer the rightful ruler of this world, yet he still has considerable influence especially over people who are not Christian.

### **Christ-in-Us Overcomes the World**

As Christian, we have been given incredible power to overcome the evil forces in this world. Jesus told his disciples:

Luke 10:19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

We have that same spiritual power – although I wouldn't try it literally with snakes and scorpions.

John the Evangelist tells us why we have this power.

1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

It is because Christ dwells in us that we can overpower the world. Everywhere we go, Christ goes. Every time we pray, Christ prays with us. Every time we bless something, it is being blessed by Christ. (Of course, I am not talking about blessing sinful things. I am assuming our prayers and blessings are for God-pleasing things.)

### **Conclusion: Wait for Christ**

I began this sermon by talking about the new world order. Many Christians are concerned about it and want to fight it. Unfortunately, some Christians start to believe that this is a political battle. Some think that we should give more money to Israel. Others say we should close the United Nations. Others say we should fight to keep America a Christian nation.

But look at what John the Baptist did. He baptized. He preached the good news that Christ is coming. He lived a simple, morally upright life. But most importantly, he waited. He waited for Christ to show himself to the world.

This Christmas season, that is what we do too. We wait. We keep the faith. We keep up our hope that this will be the year Christ comes again.

*May that peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*