

## Testifying in the Courtroom

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Easter / Testimony; Court; Judicial Courts; Eternal Life / Acts 1:12–26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9–15; John 17:11b–19

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- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

I spent nearly three weeks in a courtroom during Lent in 2014 listening to the fact of the case of whether the defendant was guilty of murder by being an accessory. I was sitting in the jury box along with 12 others. Listening to defense attorneys and the prosecuting attorneys was definitely a an experience. It was the testimony's that the judge instructed us to pay attention to. Pay attention to the facts of the case. I can also tell you during those weeks that it was very difficult to not look at the news. Emily would preview the paper for me so I didn't read anything. I basically got the obituaries and the sports page, which wasn't all that bad.

The courtroom of March/April 2014 was drastically different then the courtroom in our epistle reading. The courtroom that I sat in was determining judgement of whether the defendant was guilty of murder by being party to a crime, while the courtroom in the epistle is pointing out that the world is holding judgement against us, the church. The world tells the Church that she is wrong about eternal life in Christ. The world accuses of God of being a liar and faith is an illusion.

In this courtroom scene, God the Father is bearing witness to the life that He gives to us in His Son. God the Father testifies to the reality of life in his Son, and for our consolation.

Here in our text, John pits the two opposing sides of the courtroom against each other. This courtroom is not a physical building. This courtroom is inside each

of us, it's in our hearts. You have the way the Son that leads to life and the way of the world that leads to death as we hear in our epistle:

**Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary 5-16-2021: Seventh Sunday of Easter**

12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Each side has its own story to tell, its own way of looking at things, its own way of justifying how it looks at things - just as you see play out in the courtrooms of this world. The way of the world sets itself against God's Word concerning his Son. This is the way of wrongdoing, this is the way leads to death. This "way" of the evil one keeps the world under his seducing power. This way leads to living under the spell of a lie.

This is what the world is doing, the world is judging you, the world and the devil is really the prosecuting attorney in this sense. The powers of the evil one are attempting to make the argument that you, being a part of the church, is wrong about Christ, that Christ is merely a liar.

Satan who is the ruler of the world shows you convincing evidence. He shows you the evidence of sin - murder, hate, gossip, racism, theft, riots. You see the evidence of sin in the world daily. He will tell you, "How can a loving God allow all of this to happen?" The devil then puts together a slide show with evidence of death - death from disease, suicide, murder, natural disaster, and other tragedies. The devil will tell you, "This is the end...nothing more. There's no life beyond this one. The one you call a savior is a liar."

Satan will bring some more evidence out that is compelling. He'll show you images of pornography, he'll tell you how good alcohol or drugs will make you feel. He'll tell you if it feels good do it.

Satan as the prosecuting attorney will have compelling evidence against you, the accused, that how you live your life is a lie. He will tell you that your life that live is all a shame. Faith hasn't changed anything. This is all a false argument. It's compelling but the prosecutor is wrong.

Now the defense attorney takes his turn in the courtroom to prove that the prosecuting attorney is wrong, that God is not a liar. The Holy Spirit, the paraclete, he bears witness to to the truth in the sons of God. He defends the Son to you. He assures you that the world, the devil, and your own sinful flesh is wrong and that God is no liar. This is the truth.

The Holy Spirit who is in you comforts you. You don't need to fear the attacks of the world against you and against the church. The church including you can stand firm because it is right about Jesus and the life that God brings to you through Him. So what's the evidence, the evidence is the very Word of God spoken in truth in purity and written down for you comfort and assurance. The evidence is in the Word made flesh. This is enough, case closed.

But the Holy Spirit shows you clear evidence that God has preserved his Church and will continue to do it. He shows you the images of the time of the church shortly after Christ ascended. The church was persecuted, but God the Father preserved His Church. He was with His church, it did not die. Peter and Paul and the other apostles were arrested and martyred for the faith, but they did not waver and the church only grew.

Were these men sinners? Absolutely, God won't deny that. The Holy Spirit won't deny that, but what happened, they live in repentance and forgiveness. They are preserved from sin by the Word of God. And they respond to that very Word in prayer and praise. The images of Paul and his partner Silas singing hymns and praying while in prison only provides more evidence that God delivers.

You can move through history and you can see that your Triune God has kept the Church, He has preserved the Church through even the most vial times of history, and dear Church today He will continue to do the same today. This is the evidence that shows that God is not a liar.

As these court proceedings take place, the Holy Spirit continue to provides to you evidence that God is no liar and it takes hold in our hearts. The testimony of the Holy Spirit through all this is that God gave us eternal life, and He gave it to us through His Son.

As He does this He points to the best evidence that the defense has. He points to the cross and then he points out the prosecution. He tells you: all that evidence that the devil through against you, He causes that. He tempts you to sin. He causes hate and turmoil, murder and riot, theft and racism. He causes you to lust and to believe that you can do what feels good at any given time. The Holy Spirit points out that the prosecution has been trying to destroy the church. He's been throwing the most incriminating of evidence, he even tried it against the Son, but the Son was innocent, and the Son went innocently to the cross for you. The Son went to the cross to defeat Satan's claims. He went to the cross to defeat sin and take the wrath of God that you deserve. He died the death that you deserve. He not only died, he went into the tomb. He didn't stay in that tomb, for very early on that first day of the week, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, descended into hell and told Satan, on the prosecution's team...I win. You lose. You are the cause of all this. My Father isn't. I'm alive for my people. I'm alive and I will keep my Kingdom in truth.

The Holy Spirit's case is overwhelming and now, you aren't the accused. God is not the liar. The defense has proved beyond a reasonable doubt and even more so that you are not guilty. He's also gone a step farther and has proven that the devil is the liar. He has tried to sway you with lies...compelling lies, but lies none-the-less. He's the liar. God is telling the truth concerning His Son. Now, dear Church, you receive the benefit of what Christ has done and his victory over the world and all of its false claims.

Now, yes, case closed, you are not guilty...you are innocent in the eyes of God because of His Son. And now, Satan and his evil minions, they are the accused. Today again in your hearing, life overcomes death. This faith that you have now in the Son assures you have of this glad verdict, and it even trusts in God's final fulfillment that is coming on the last day.

We give God thanks and praise, that Christ Jesus is alive and that he is the most overwhelming of evidence that He took your sin and died for it and lives again so that his life overcomes the death you deserve.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

