17th Sunday after Trinity - Bessemer 1957 Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

Luke 14: 1 And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched Him.

## BEING WATCHED

Wherever Jesus went He compelled attention. Whether among friends or foes He was the center of attraction. He was always in the public eye. He -- the eternal Son of the Most High, the Word made flesh -- was not to be ignored or disregarded! Although He sought no political office, no public acclaim, no world renown; He did seek the hearts of men. By the power of Word and Deed He held Himself out as Redeemer and urged sin-stricken souls to believe and follow Him. He pleaded for their affection, their devotion, their lives, their all!

Some did follow, gladly, to the end. Others followed for a while out of pure curiosity, But when their curiosity was satisfied and they began to realize the cost of discipleship, they left Him. The religious leaders, almost without exception, turned against Him. His claims were preposterous. He was a faker, a blasphemer. He was dangerous to the religious life of the nation. What would be their standing among the people, were He permitted to go on preaching! He had to be stopped! In order to do this they had to find arguments against Him , something to pin on Him. They had to convince the people that they were right and He wrong.

"And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day that they watched Him." They watched Him very closely! Like hawks they circled around Him watching for an opportunity to pounce upon Him! Their purpose was, as on many other occasions, to lure Him into a trap. They hoped to find some good reason to accuse Him of wrongdoing and bring Him before the council and the magistrates. Such was their intent on this particular Sabbath in the chief Pharisee's house, but their moment never came. He did heal the sick man on the Sabbath, but He silenced Him enemies with divine authority. "They held their peace!" "They could not answer." All human arguments fail before divine truth. Their mouths were stopped, but their hatred for Him grew.

Certainly Jesus was well aware of the fact that they were watching and spying on Him; but He never ran into hiding, out of fear. He lived His life out in the open in plain view of everybody. He had nothing to hide, nothing to be ashamed of. When invited for dinner to the Pharisee's home, He accepted, walked into the "lions' den" with a good conscience and faced His enemies, daring them to do their worst.

These enemies are forever silenced, but Jesus lives on. They thought they were rid of Him when the Roman seal was placed on the stone rolled in front of His garden-tomb on Good Friday, but not so! You can never be done with Jesus, the Christ. He confronts each succeeding generation with the same claim of Messiahship and the same challenge to discipleship. He belongs to no particular age, but to all ages. This timeless One marches down the corridor of time, always disturbing, always arousing curiosity in men's minds, always dividing people into two classes -- those for Him and those against Him.

Every age has put its searchlight on Him, The keenest minds have searched every stitch of every seam of His divine-human garment. Many have done so in order to find imperfections in His character, His life, His Word. But still Jesus lives on from age to age, His character as unsoiled and pure as ever, and His Word still "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Even as Jesus was watched, so the searchlight of public opinion has ever been on the Church. The Church was watched in the apostolic day, but what a Church it was -- full of life and vigor, of enthusiasm and vitality, of compassion and missionary zeal! The enemies, beholding it said, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching." When the apostle Paul and his fellow travelers came to Thessalonica, the Jews of the city, who had heard of this new movement, said with trembling voices, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." The outsiders, watching the fellowship of believers, exclaimed, "Behold, how they love one another!"

They saw a Church with no prestige so far as worldly prestige is concerned, but nevertheless a Church with great power. They saw a Church, where "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Conversions were daily occurrences. The Church was, indeed, a conquering army, marching forward under the banner of the cross. This Church knew no retreat, It listened to and obeyed only one Commander, the Lord Jesus Christ. It knew only one command, "Go!" It asked no favors of men, only the favor of God. Its only glory was a Cross. Its only passion was the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls.

The Church of today is likewise being watched today. How does it look? How does it compare with the early Church? There are voices being raised, calling attention to the sad condition of the present-day Church. E. Stanley Jones has made the statement that the modern Church is more a field for evangelism that a force for it. Others have said that the Church of today suffers from spiritual anemia, and is therefore weak and ineffective. Instead of the Church moving into the world, influencing it for Christ, the world has been edging itself gradually into the Church.

The Church was not placed in this world to offer ease and comfort. It is placed here to disturb, to convict to sin, to stir people out of their complacency and laziness. Its duty is to wield the two-edged sword that cuts to the quick. It is to pronounce judgment upon a materialistic and pleasure-mad age. Its duty is not to win mere numbers of the church records, but to win souls for the Kingdom.

As a Christian you are to be a living epistle of Christ, your Lord and Redeemer. You are commanded to "walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." You are to be light and salt in the world and a witness for Christ to your fellow men. Your life is to be an advertisement of the Savior. Your daily prayer should be, "Teach me Thy paths!" The world is watching! When they looked at the early Christians, it is stated, "they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." What about you?

What about your conversation? Can you speak glibly and eloquently about everything under the sun, but become speechless when there is an opportunity to give a testimony for the Lord? Peter and John testified courageously of their faith in the Lord. Commanded not to preach any more in the name of Jesus, the apostles replied, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." What about you? Is your testimony silenced because you are afraid of being ridiculed?

The world is watching. Is there harmony between your confession and your life? Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see you good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." You sang, "Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee." Did you mean what you sang? What about your stewardship? Do you take time to be holy, to be filled with the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit? Do you bury your talent in the ground, as did the unfaithful servant, or do you put it to work for Christ? Are you giving generously for the cause of Christ and His Kingdom? Zaccheus, when converted, said, "The half of my goods I give to the poor."

How do you spend your Sundays? The world is watching. Is it a day of worship and prayer, or a day of pleasure-seeking? Jesus spread sunshine and happiness on this particular Sabbath, when He healed the sick man. His followers should follow in His steps and make of the Lord's Day a day of joy in their own lives and in the lives of others.

The early Christians lived a life of expectancy, saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." They longed for the return of the Savior. What about you? Are you living in a permanent residence here in this world, feeling quite well at home, or are you a tent-dweller, ready to break camp at a moment's notice to be with the Lord?

The eyes of the world are upon you. The world watches to find faults, to criticize, to ridicule. The world is watching to discover arguments against Christianity and the Christ whom you profess to love and serve.

Come then and bow before your Lord's healing cross. Experience the joy of having your sins removed forever through His precious and holy blood. Under His compassionate benediction receive the strength to live this life to the glory of God and the welfare of your neighbor. Amen.