

## Sermon for Confirmation Sunday—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/1/2005

**Title:** “Stand Up for Jesus!”

**Text:** Acts 26: 19-29

**Intro.:** *Ills.: Get a life!*

**Theme:** Today, when among Christian friends and family it is easy to stand up for Jesus because of their approval; yet, make the approval of your Savior Jesus, your prime motivator for your future commitment and devotion of faith.

*Faith is . . .*

- Bearing good news for Jesus (vs. 19-20)
  1. **Ills.: Self-serving existence**
  2. You are the ambassadors of the most wonderful truth that the world has ever know
  3. *Repent and turn to God* who is waiting with open arms of unconditional grace to receive you for Jesus’ sake
- Suffering anything for Jesus’ sake (vs. 21)
  1. Life in Jesus and for Jesus in this world is not always a bed of roses
    - a. *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. John 15: 19*
  2. Paul understood the real consequences of running the flag of Jesus over the castle of his heart — he became a target
    - a. *Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 1 Pt 4:13*
- Courageously standing up for Jesus (vs. 22a)
  2. Given an example by Paul who never let political correctness or personal comfort deter his love & witness for Jesus
  3. *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you 1 Tim. 6:12-13*
  4. **A living hope of the resurrection** – willing to take the fall for Jesus because you know that your too shall rise
  5. **Ills.: Take a stand for Jesus in Estes Park**

*Developing the spiritual discipline of a witnessing faith*

- Know your Bible and what it has to say to your faith (vs. 22b)
  1. **“You can’t give what you don’t already have.”**
  2. Easy for us to listen to sermons, verses, studies, religious talk shows and think of how it applies to others
  3. *Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3: 14-17*
- Know your Savior and the key elements of your faith (vs. 23a)
  1. The key question: What do you believe in as a Christian?
  2. **Death and resurrection of Jesus and repentance for the forgiveness of sins.** (Luke 24: 46-47)
- Know your mission as a believer and disciple (vs. 23b)
  1. **Ills.: An Atheist’s perspective on the purpose of life**
  2. Paul knew that just as Jesus had a mission to proclaim to Jew and Gentile he followed his lead in his own life
  3. **Made disciples to make disciples** (Matt. 28: 19) — friend, family member, classmate, future spouse, fellow worker
- Assume the best and be prepared for the worst (vs. 24-29)

1. Paul assumed the best about King Agrippa and his listening audience that they could and wanted to believe
  - a. Agrippa's lineage — Great grandfather—Bethlehem baby killer; grandfather—taunted Jesus; father—killed Apostle James
  - b. Festus and his entourage were jaded bureaucrats
  - c. *To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 1 Cor. 9:22*
  - d. Never discount how you might be used to reach another—no matter how undeserving you or they are
2. Be prepared mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to be rejected and persecuted (even like Paul to be put in chains)
  - a. *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven. Mat 5: 11-12*

### **Get a life!**

"If somebody offered you \$2 million, could you give up sports for two years?" This was the question a sports radio station recently asked its listeners. No games on TV, radio, or in person. No sports page. No ESPN highlight films. No Tuesday morning arguing about Monday Night Football. One fan phoned in and said no, he would definitely not give up sports, not even for \$25 million. "It's where I turn when I pick up the paper in the morning," he said. "It's where I go when I'm on the Internet. It's what I watch on television. It's what I listen to on the radio in the car. Everywhere I go, it surrounds everything I do." **Citation: Mark Galli, "The Thirst of the 24/7 Fan," *Christianity Today* (3-28-05)**

### **Self-serving existence**

The story goes that a young man applied for a job as an usher at a theater in the mall. The manager asked him, "What would you do in case a fire breaks out?" The young guy answered, "Don't worry about me. I'd get out okay."

**Citation: *Illustration Digest* (March-April-May, 1993); submitted by Lee Eclov, Lincolnshire, Illin**

### **Taking a Stand for Jesus in Estes Park**

Twenty years ago, my wife and I were vacationing in Estes Park, Colorado, and had breakfast in a coffee shop. It was empty except for four men at another table. One was mocking Christianity; in particular, the resurrection of Christ. He went on and on about what a stupid teaching that was. I could feel the Lord asking me: "Are you going to let this go unchallenged?" However, I was thinking, *But I don't even know these guys. He's bigger than me. He's got cowboy boots on and looks tough.* I was agitated and frightened about doing anything. But I knew I had to stand for Jesus. Finally, I told Susan to pray. I took my last drink of water and went over and challenged him. With probably a squeaky voice, I said, "I've been listening to you, and you don't know what you're talking about!" I did my best to give him a flying rundown of the proofs for the resurrection. He was speechless, and I was half dead. I must have shaken for an hour after that. But I had to take a stand. We cannot remain anonymous in our faith forever. God has a way of flushing us out of our quiet little places, and when he does we must be ready to speak for him. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." **Citation: Lee Eclov, Vernon Hills, Illinois**

## **An Atheist's Perspective on the Purpose of Life**

Freelance writer Greta Christina, published often in feminist and adult magazines, is brutally honest regarding her dilemma about dying. As an atheist, she realizes she has a problem with facing death and disbelieving in an afterlife. Writing in a magazine popular with skeptics called the *Skeptical Inquirer*, she admits:

Death can be an appalling thing to think about. Not just frightening, not just painful. It can be paralyzing. The fact that your life span is an infinitesimally tiny fragment in the life of the universe, that there is, at the very least, a strong possibility that when you die, you disappear completely and forever, and that in 500 years nobody will remember you and in five billion years Earth will fall into the Sun—this can be a profound and defining truth about your existence that you reflexively repulse, that you flinch away from and refuse to accept or even think about, consistently pushing it to the back of your mind whenever it sneaks up for fear that if you allow it to sit in your mind even for a minute, it will swallow everything else. It can make everything you do, and anything anyone else does, seem meaningless, trivial to the point of absurdity. It can make you feel erased, wipe out joy, make your life seem like ashes in your hands.

**Citation: Greta Christina, "Comforting Thoughts about Death That Have Nothing To Do With God", *Skeptical Inquirer* (March/April 2005), pp 50-51; submitted by Jerry De Luca, Montreal West, Quebec, Canada**

### **Acts 26:19-29**

<sup>19</sup>"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup>but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. <sup>21</sup>"For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. <sup>22</sup>"So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; <sup>23</sup>that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." <sup>24</sup>While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad." <sup>25</sup>But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. <sup>26</sup>"For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>"King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." <sup>28</sup>Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." <sup>29</sup>And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains." (NASB)