

Pastor Brian's
Mid Week Message
September 1, 2021

"QUIET...FOR NOW!"

"You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles." (Matthew 10:18)

Right now, the pace of life in our neighborhood is pretty slow, and it's very quiet. Around the canal behind our house there might be two other houses occupied at the present time, that's out of about a dozen. Only one boat regularly leaves its dock. The only regular noises that we hear are the weekly visits of the lawn mowers to each house. They may be unoccupied but that certainly doesn't keep the grass from growing...very quickly. All of this means that there aren't a lot of people around to talk to, not many to share the good news of God's love for all of us in Christ Jesus. But we know that all that should change within the next few months as our long-lost neighbors begin returning from their northern abodes to escape the ravages of winter there. We moved in last year (2020) during the summer, while these same neighbors we're away. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic once they did return there just wasn't much socializing and getting to know one another due the fears of many. I pray that this is not the case this "season". The number one mission of the Church, both collectively and individually is to carry the Gospel with us everywhere we go and to deliver it to all who are in need of it. The undeniable truth is that EVERYONE needs it. The model that Jesus gives us to tell us what that looks like is found in Acts 1:8, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* Empowered by the Holy Spirit, God, who lives within us we are called to testify to what we know about Jesus and the salvation that He freely offers, beginning with those nearest to us and extending outward from there. On an individual basis, we are to start in our own homes and families, then expand the effort into our neighborhood, our community, state, nation and to all the world. Again, notice where the first focus needs to be...those closest to us, those within the circles that our everyday life takes us. I don't think that you need me to tell you (but I will anyway) that living out a Christian life and bearing witness to Jesus is getting more difficult in these United States. Things are even worse in most other parts of the world. I also believe that it's pretty obvious that things are going to get harder for us. It's going to get worse. Then again, we really ought to expect that, because Jesus has told us about it in advance. In Matthew chapter 10 our Lord is speaking to His disciples, and that includes us some 2000 years later. *"Beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me. When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time."* (17-19) Of course, the first apostles saw this happen in their own lives. They boldly proclaimed Jesus and paid the price for it. All of them were persecuted and all but one of them was put to death for their faith and witness. Not a one of them backed down, even in the face of great danger to themselves. In this post Christian time that we live in our circumstances are now almost the same as back in the 1st century AD. We believe and proclaim Jesus in a culture that does not know Him, that doesn't know the One True God. We live in a world of idolatry, with the chief idol being that of "self". Back in the Roman times that was called "epicureanism"...pleasure as the highest good. "It's all about me!" The day is coming, even in this country, when we'll risk arrest, imprisonment and even death for the cause of Christ. But notice a message of hope in the middle of those verses, a message that God will be in control of it all and work in these circumstances for good, ours and that of others. Jesus clearly says, *"You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me."* (verse 18) Trouble is coming, and we should expect it and be ready for it. The unbelieving world is never going to be our friend, the ruler of that world is the devil himself, our public enemy number 1. Even in all of its evil and hate though God will make sure that we have the opportunity to speak light into the darkness, to testify to Jesus before its rulers and authorities. When that opportunity comes we should seize it boldly and confidently and speak the words that God the Holy Spirit gives to us, simply telling the story of Jesus and His love shown to us in our lives.