

Pastor Brian's  
Mid Week Message  
February 17, 2021

**"CANCEL CULTURE!"**

*"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Acts 5:28*

The Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans this year was cancelled due to the fear that it would become a "super spreader" event for Covid-19. It is widely believed that this was the case a year ago leading to New Orleans being one of the first "Covid hot spots". That might have been a blessing in disguise as yesterday's high temperature in New Orleans was all of 33 degrees Fahrenheit, a full 33 degrees below average for February 16<sup>th</sup>. Despite the first cancellation of Mardi Gras events in over 40 years, Ash Wednesday and Lent go on as scheduled, not just in New Orleans but around the world. Today is the day that we enter into the penitential season of preparation for our Lord Jesus' passion, His death and ultimate resurrection. The observance of "Lent" has been going on, uninterrupted, for more than 1800 years. Cancellations are a hot topic in our culture today. The political correctness movement has gotten to the point of "cancelling" free speech, a right that has been guaranteed in our Constitution, the Bill of Rights adopted December 15<sup>th</sup> of 1791. Any speech that does not agree with the social and political viewpoints of some is to be suppressed and even to be deemed illegal. Unfortunately, within that "some" are powerful people, both in government and business, who are giving aid and comfort to this enemy of our nation's fundamental principles. Rest assured that the "Cancel Culture" has its sites set on the Christian Church as well. But then again, that's not anything new to us. From our very beginning the Church has faced strong opposition from all sides. In the wake of Pentecost, the "Birthday of the Church", the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem had the apostles arrested and jailed out of jealousy for the converts that the Gospel was winning. (Acts 5:17ff) An angel came in the night opening the jail doors and leading them out, commanding them to stand in the Temple courts and proclaim the Gospel, which they did, beginning at daybreak. Once those in charge found out they were again brought before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. *"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." (Acts 5:28)* The apostle's response is powerful! *"We must obey God rather than men!"* (verse 29) At the end of the chapter, after being beaten and commanded not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, the apostles were released. Their response? *The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (41-42)* The enemies of God, who are under the leadership of the devil, have not and will not stop in their quest to silence the Church, the people of God and the presence of Jesus on earth. Try as they might...and they will...the cancel culture will fail just like all others before. Jesus has given us His guarantee on that. *"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock [that of his confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God] I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matthew 16:18) It seems obvious to me, that in the direction that this nation and world is going, it's going to get a lot more difficult to carry out our mission of proclaiming Christ to the nations. What we know is that, try as the world might, they're never going to succeed in "cancelling" the Church. If we stand firm in our proclamation that Jesus is the Christ, as the Holy Spirit empowers us, speaking boldly of His truth and His love for all people, we cannot fail, we will not be silenced. Suffering for the sake of the Name may not sound like something we relish the thought of, but Jesus suffered more than we could ever imagine for us. Being counted worthy to share in His suffering is truly a blessing! Peter, in his first epistle, writes this, *"Even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled."* (1 Peter 3:14) We stand with Christ. We stand in Christ, and Christ, and His Church, will stand forever.