

9 We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which He has given about his Son.

"Human testimony" – understood from the preceding verses. When Jesus encountered people who would not accept His testimony about Himself, He pointed them to His works, John 10:25. Better than the two or three witnesses required for human testimony, John calls three ultra-reliable witnesses of God Himself.

10 Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about His Son.

"Whoever believes in..." – the difference between an intellectual assent in Jesus as a historical figure who did good and set an example to

follow; and personally trusting in Jesus, Son of God and crucified Saviour and Lord.

11-12 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

"Whoever has the Son has life" – to "have the Son" comes simply through faith in Christ, not any good works, and this is what gives us a new dimension of life now, as well as assurance of eternal life (v.13), John 14:6, Acts 4:12.

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

"So you may know" – vv.11-13 makes the clearest possible statement that our relationship with the Son determines whether or not we possess eternal life.

SUMMARY John sets out the three witnesses of the Spirit, the water of His baptism and the blood of His sacrificial death to Jesus being the Son of God. These are the reliable witnesses of God Himself which speak against all philosophies attempting to diminish the truth of His unique redemptive role.

APPLICATION John wants those that read or hear his letter to know assurance of eternal life by having confidence in the key proofs of who Jesus is. In an age where it fashionable to distrust absolutes – this is an absolute.

QUESTION *How do you respond to the heart-felt believing in Jesus that John expects?*

PRAYER Father, we thank You again for sending Your Son, Jesus, and giving us the joy of knowing You through Him.

May we who are not eye-witnesses have the Holy Spirit confidence of Your first apostles to testify to Jesus crucified, resurrected and living, as someone we know well.

Send us into the world with its scepticism and political correctness with a different voice – the voice You give us of clear and confident testimony in Jesus' name. Amen.

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The Living Word

Bible readings for Sunday, May 16, 2021, with explanatory notes

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Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for **May 16**
Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching

Theme: **Joy and confidence is God's reward for upholding His truth**

Psalm 1 – In life's choices the good way is always God's way

John 17:6-19 – Jesus is praying for His present and future disciples

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 – Witness to the truth of Jesus' resurrection

1 John 5:6-13 – Three divine witnesses to the truth of who Jesus is

Psalm 1 – In life's choices the good way is always God's way

Delighting in God's word as truth to live by invites God's watchful favour

1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take, or sit in the company of mockers...

"Blessed" – *ashrey*, more literally 'joys', is an introduction to all the psalms, the promise for all those who read and reflect on them. This psalm promises joyful blessings to God's people who choose a different path from the habitually wicked "mockers".

2-3 ...but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on His law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

"That person" – the individual, as "blessed is the one" (v.1), who faces the unbelieving majority with a way of life that's rooted in the Word and which "prosper" from the constancy of God's provision and protection.

• *For further study, see Jeremiah 17:5-8, Joshua 1:8, Matthew 6:33.*

SUMMARY Those who delight in God's way, choosing to reflect on His word and live by it, will know the joy of the Lord and His favour bringing success in what they do.

APPLICATION God wants us to make our life choices in accordance with His word and that is what He will bless. We need the courage of our convictions to determine not to be drawn into the ways of the majority who have little regard for God.

QUESTION *How do we feed on God's true word and still engage in regular life?*

4-5 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

"The wicked" – showing a disregard for God and His Way. Failure to be anchored in God's truth leaves us vulnerable to opinion and a weak influence to community or church.

"Assembly of the righteous" – gathered for worship at the temple. "The righteous" is one of several terms in the OT for God's people who honour Him and prioritise His will.

6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

"Watches over" – an intimate, relational word. "Wicked" – our 'I know best' independence casts us loose from the security of relationship with God. God is already encouraging the way of the righteous, but has no connection with the way of the ungodly except in judgment, Psalm 146:9, Galatians 6:7-10.

John 17:6-19 – Jesus is praying for His present and future disciples

He prays for their unity to be maintained against the deceptions of the enemy

6-7 **"I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your word. Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You.**

"I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me" – a summary of Christ's mission, revealing the true person of God to the world, gathering up God's people into His flock and being the Way to the Father, John 14:6.

8 **"For I gave them the words You gave Me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me.**

"They knew with certainty" – the disciples, unlike the Pharisees, grasped that Jesus came from the Father, and believed what He taught knowing it was from the Father and was truth. The Holy Spirit's revelation to come would enable them to fit the rest of the pieces together.

9-10 **"I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given Me, for they are Yours. All I have is Yours, and all You have is mine. And glory has come to Me through them.**

"I pray for them... not... for the world" — because they belong to the Father, the more so, as He is leaving them to carry on the mission in the world, v.11 below.

11 **"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name, the name You gave Me, so that they may be one as We are one.**

"That they may be one" – with the sense of continuing in the unity of mind and heart they have been given about God's purpose and their mission.

12 **"While I was with them, I protected**

them and kept them safe by that name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

"Doomed... so that Scripture would be fulfilled" — referring to Judas Iscariot.

• *For further study, see Psalm 41:9; John 13:18; and Psalms 69:25, 109:8.*

13-14 **"I am coming to You now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of My joy within them. I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.**

"Not of the world" – not having the pessimistic, unbelieving mindset of the world. They have been "born of the Spirit" and are "children of God", John 3:8, John 1:12, and when the Holy Spirit is given, they will have the full measure of the Lord's joy, John 16:20, 22-24.

15-16 **"My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.**

"Not...take them out of the world"— following Jesus brings protection under the New Covenant, and the realisation that Satan does not give up ground easily. Christians have to relate to people and policies of contrary beliefs and values, while drawing strength and guidance from the Holy Spirit as those who are not of the world.

17-19 **"Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."**

"Sanctify them" — make them holy. Our coming to know Jesus, who is the truth, and our being empowered by the Spirit of Truth, changes us and set us apart for God – on a course of being sanctified, or made holy, in Bible language. All disciples of Jesus are "holy people" or "saints", Romans 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2, Ephesians 1:1.

SUMMARY Jesus prays for the protection and continuing unity of those who belong to Him, asking that they might be joyful and confident in upholding truth.

APPLICATION Against a backdrop of decline in church attendance in the First World, the churches that are bucking the trend and attracting families and young

people are those with a clear confident message about who Jesus is and our need to receive Him into our hearts.

QUESTION *What is our message for those who are seeking spiritual assurance?*

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 – Witness to the truth of Jesus' resurrection

Matthias, who had known Jesus from the start, was chosen to replace Judas

15-17 **In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about 120) and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in our ministry."**

"Peter stood up" — Peter, who made mistakes and was quick to acknowledge them, is stepping up to the leadership he will show in the Early Church.

21-22 **"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."**

"Necessary to choose" — Peter had (v.20) spoken

two well-known sayings from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 "May his place be deserted... May another take his place of leadership" which they took as a prophetic word to them to complete the number of the Twelve.

"Witness with us" – the candidate needed to be a witness to Jesus' resurrection, who had also known Him for the preceding three years. It was essential for the first apostles to be first-hand witnesses of how Jesus showed Himself to be Messiah, to counter threats and denials of the Jewish rulers.

23-26 **So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, You know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.**

"Casting lots" – a way of making a choice before the coming of the Holy Spirit who Himself guides and leads God's people.

SUMMARY Peter stands up to offer leadership and shares a prophetic word about choosing a replacement for Judas Iscariot to take over the apostolic ministry. They choose Matthias to be a fellow guardian of the apostolic truth.

APPLICATION The ministry we can share depends on how well we know the resurrected Lord and can speak the truth about Him from our own experience.

QUESTION *How could we follow Peter's example of guidance from a prophetic word of Scripture?*

1 John 5:6-13 – Three divine witnesses to the truth of who Jesus is

The apostle says that believing the testimony is assurance of eternal life

6 **This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.**

The Spirit, the water and the blood" — John is making a point to refute the serious Gnostic error of separating the divine Jesus and the human Jesus: He was fully God and fully man throughout life and in His death. He was affirmed as God's Son (1) by the voice of God at His baptism; (2) at His atoning death, accompanied by the signs of sudden darkness, earthquake and rending of the temple curtain and (3) by the witness of the Spirit in the hearts of believers.