

Dear Confessors of Our Lord:

“A time to be silent and a time to speak.” Ecclesiastes 3:7

The Bible teaches us that there is a time to say something – a time to speak – and there is a time not to say something – a time to be silent.

Back in the early days of WW II eight American flyers were captured by the Japanese. These flyers were part of the American bombing mission upon Tokyo just a few months after the Japanese bombed our naval vessels at Pearl Harbor. The Japanese could not believe that American planes could reach Tokyo and drop bombs on the city.

For this reason the Japanese tried to find out how these American flyers reached Tokyo. They tried many means to get these American flyers to talk. “How did your planes reach our city? What base did they fly out of? What naval carrier brought them here?”

The flyers were given the option of life – if they spoke, or death if they remained silent.

They remained silent...for the sake of their fellow flyers and sailors.

In the days of the early church Christians were often given the option to speak or remain silent.

- If you speak and deny Christ your life will be spared
- If you remain silent your life will be taken
- The believers remained silent for the sake of Christ did not deny him.

There are times when we need to speak and times when we need to be silent.

This is especially true when it comes to vows or oaths. There are times in our lives that we speak an oath or a vow. When we are...

- getting married

- called to testify in a courtroom
- being confirmed in the faith

A vow or an oath is serious and it is to be thought through carefully. The same is true of a statement of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- many people today have never given Jesus much thought in their lives
- they may flippantly say things that mark them as unbelievers
- to make a statement of faith is a serious thing to do but it is proper for those who truly believe

People take vows at their marriage.

People take an oath at their confirmation.

It is good and proper to speak vows or an oath in these situations but we all need to be careful to avoid an untimely vow or a careless word spoken .

I. In regard to one's faith vv14-20

A. In Jesus' day there were a number of responses to His identity. The Gospel writer Mark says: "Jesus name had become well-known..." King Herod, the Roman puppet ruler of the Jewish people, had been attracted to what he heard about Jesus but not attracted enough to believe in Him as the Messiah and Savior.

Many people refused to believe in Jesus as the God-Man. They spoke statements of unbelief. Some even took vows in court testifying that Jesus was not the Messiah. Ie at Jesus' trial

Today there are many people in their everyday lives who make statements of unbelief. People want to refuse to believe in God's Word or Jesus thinking that the facts about Jesus must be unreasonable. They say...

- Jesus could not have been God-Man.
- Jesus must be something else
- Unbelief always believes the most unlikely thing

Jesus was a historical person. No one can disbelieve in Christ because of a lack of evidence.

“Unbelievers are seldom convinced by argument for the springs of unbelief are in the heart rather than in the head.”

The Bible says Jesus is true God and true Man.

- The Bible is God’s Word
- The Bible has never been refuted by archaeology
- The Bible has never been refuted by history
- The Bible has never been refuted by science

We have secular historians – Tacitus, Pliny, Lucian and Julian among others who testify that Jesus was a real person who lived some 2000 years ago.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler of Jerusalem in Jesus’ day, wrote to the Roman emperor Tiberius: “Herod delivered to me...that I should try him – Christ...and at the time he was crucified - there was darkness over all the world, the sun being darkened at mid-day.”

Julian the Apostate – was the Roman emperor some 300 years after Jesus was born. He tried to destroy Christianity with a book that he wrote. In the end he actually affirmed the truth of Jesus and said that the Gospel writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were authentic sources of Christianity.

Goethe, the German genius, called Jesus the Divine Man, the Holy One. Ernest Renan, the great French scholar who tried to tear the Bible to pieces, after his attempts he called Christ, “a man of colossal dimensions, the Son of God.”

Rousseau, the French philosopher, wrote: “Shall we suppose the evangelical history a mere fiction?”

Napolean said: “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man...but Deity.” He wrote these words after being banned to an island where he only had the Bible.”

Leo Tolstoi – the great Russian writer and atheist wrote: “For 35 years of my life I was ...a man who believed in nothing. Now I believe in the doctrine of Jesus and my whole life has undergone a sudden transformation...instead of despair I tasted joy and happiness that death could not take away.”

Lord Byron – the great Englishman said: “If ever man was God or God-man, Jesus Christ was both.”

Whatever you say or believe about Jesus you have to come to one of three conclusions... Jesus is either who he said he was Lord and Savior or he is a liar or a lunatic.

Paul warned us in Colossians 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

Peter reminds us in I Peter 3:15 **“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

The Word of God is objectively true.

Jesus as God-Man is objectively true.

Our faith is based on fact.

The false conclusions about Jesus in his day were...

- Jesus was the reincarnated John the Baptist
- Jesus was the prophet Elijah who came down from heaven
- Jesus was only a great prophet

B. The response of King Herod vv16-20

Who was this Herod?

He was Herod Antipas – the son of Herod the Great. His family tree was a gloomy succession of murder and sexual depravity.

He was chosen by the Romans to be the Jewish ruler over Galilee.

Herod married his niece, Herodias, who had been married to his half-brother Philip.

Herod was a moral coward. Luke 23:6-12

Herod had John the Baptist arrested and put in prison because...

- John had called Herod out for marrying his brother's wife
- Herodias, Herod's wife nursed a grudge against John for his statement of condemnation
- Herod feared John and protected him
- The Bible says Herod liked to listen to John but was puzzled by him

But Herod made a mistake. He spoke at a time when he should have kept silent.

II. Herod's untimely vow vv21-24

A. The setting vv21-24

It was Herod's birthday and he was throwing a party. The guests at his party were the elite of society and government. When it was time for entertainment the daughter of Herod's wife was called out to dance.

This was a pagan dance which no Jewish mother would allow her daughter to partake in. But Herodias, Herod's wife and the mother of the dancing girl looked upon this time as an opportunity to kill John the Baptist.

The dance so pleased Herod and his guests that he told the girl she could have anything she wanted even up to half of his kingdom. The Bible says he promised her with an oath.

- the girl asks her mother, Herodias, what she should ask for
- her mother was ready for an answer: John the Baptist's head
- no time was spared as the girl hurried back to Herod with this request
- Herod knew he had spoken out of line v26 He was distressed...

- Herod was caught in a trap with his oath and to save face he commanded his executioner to fulfill the request.

B. The Dilemma - vv25-29

- Herod was very sad that his wife had gotten what she always wanted
- Herod most likely knew what the Old Testament said about oaths Dt 23:21f; Lev 5:4f
- Herod also was a man of pride – he could not back down before his guests

Have we ever wished we could take back something we had said?

Jesus said we are not to make frivolous oaths and vows. Matthew 5:33-37

There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent.

- Be ready to speak the truth about Jesus
- Be ready to stop and think before we say anything that may not be right
- Be ready to receive Jesus' forgiveness for those times we make mistakes.