



America loves diets. And due to the fact that diets are so popular yet so often ineffective, there seem to be almost as many diets as there are dieters who try them. Here is a just a sampling of some favorites; perhaps you have even tried a few of these: We have the One-Day Diet, the Three-Day Diet, the Three-Hour Diet, and The Seven-Day All You Can Eat Diet... There is the Chocolate Diet, the Lemonade Diet, the Grapefruit Diet, the Acai Berry Diet, the Liquid Diet, and the Nothing-But-Cabbage Soup Diet (Yum!)... There is the Hollywood Diet, the Beverly Hills Diet, the South Beach Diet, the Mediterranean Diet, and the Lazy Man's Diet (I actually tried this once during an A-Team Marathon in college... It didn't work... at all)... Finally, you can try the Negative Calorie Diet, the Detox Diet, the Macrobiotic Diet, the Tapeworm Diet, or (my favorite) the Amputation Diet.

But, this morning, I want to introduce the message by presenting you with a diet much more helpful than any of these: the Diet of Worms. Are you familiar with this Diet? It actually has nothing to do with food. The Diet of Worms is the rather odd name given to the imperial diet of the Holy Roman Empire that convened in Worms, Germany in 1621. (A diet in that day referred to a formal assembly of religious and political leaders). It is to this assembly that Martin Luther was summoned to renounce his teaching that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone and not by any meritorious works of man—a doctrine in strident opposition to settled Roman Catholic doctrine.

When presented with his many writings and asked by this imperial assembly to repudiate them, Luther asked for more time to answer. He was given until the next day at 4:00 p.m. This clip from the movie "Luther" gives a depiction of what happened next.

The historical moment reenacted in that film may very well represent the most important historical event of the last 1000 years. And it only

happened because Martin Luther was moved not by the fear of man, but reverent fear of the Lord. With his life on the line, Luther stood fearless for Christ and, before his accusers, he insisted upon the one true Gospel once for all delivered to the saints. Hear once more the now famous words he spoke in the face of intense persecution: He said, "I am bound by the Scriptures adduced by me, and my conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God, and I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand; I can do no other; so help me God. Amen."

Imagine if Luther had given in to the pressure and chosen to repudiate the right Gospel. Would we even be here today worshipping freely according to doctrines chosen by conscience rather than coercion? Would there be a Baptist church? Who knows? Maybe not? However, because in that critical moment Luther chose to speak the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Protestant Reformation was propelled forward to the place where we worship today.

Ever since the resurrection, confessing Jesus Christ before others has been a central part of God's purposes for His people. Indeed, the very onset of new life in Christ begins verbal confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. Romans 10:8-11 declares, *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord** and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, **and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.** For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.'"*

In light of the example of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms and, especially, in light of the words of Paul in Romans 10, we arrive at our **Big Idea** this morning, which is this: **Verbal confession of Christ is a necessary outworking of true faith.**

As we begin our study of this text this morning and seek to understand and apply this teaching of Christ, it is important to take note of its context. At the end of the previous chapter (chapter 11), Jesus is reclining at a Pharisee's dinner party. However, I very much doubt that any of the Pharisees enjoyed their dinners, because well before any food was served, Jesus began rebuking the Pharisees harshly with words they desperately

needed to hear but arrogantly refused to consider. In very stark language, Jesus warns them very sternly about their greed, self-indulgence, hypocrisy, and self-deception. Yet, as Jesus leaves this gathering, Luke records in verses 53-54, *“The scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.”* Being rebuked by a carpenter from Nazareth was more than these religious leaders were willing to take. In their minds, Jesus had gone way too far, and they were determined to get revenge.

Chapter 12 begins with Jesus in the midst of an enormous crowd speaking specifically to His disciples in the aftermath of that dinner. In verse 1, we read, *“In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, **he began to say to his disciples first**, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”* And this conversation directed specifically at His disciples continues all the way through verse 12, which marks the end of today’s passage. In light of the malice Jesus knows is in the hearts of the religious leaders, He takes this opportunity to prepare His disciples for the persecution that He knows is on the way.

Here is what was ahead for them as a consequence of their confession of Jesus Christ as Lord: John would be tortured and then sent into exile... Philip, Andrew would both be crucified... James would be beheaded... Matthew would be massacred with a halberd... James the brother of Jesus would be crucified, then stoned, and then beaten to death with a club... Thomas would be killed by a spear... Bartholomew would be flayed alive and crucified... Mark would be dragged to death in the streets... and Peter would be crucified upside-down.

With such ruthless persecution ahead of them, the opening verses of chapter 12 carry added significance, don't they? First, in verses 1-3, Jesus warns His disciples against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, because their insincere, self-absorbed religion would never survive the coming peril. Then, in verses 4-7, as we discussed last week, Jesus shows His followers the folly of fearing people and calls upon them to embrace the fear that can make them fearless—that is, the fear of the Lord. Finally, all this conversation leads to today’s text, where Jesus addresses the point at which our greatest allegiance is acutely tested—uncomfortable confession. That is, *will we*

acknowledge Jesus before men even when doing so is hard, or unpopular, or dangerous, or even deadly? Will we fear God most even when the fear of man is most acute?

Knowing the persecutions that lay ahead, Jesus wants His followers to be prepared for them and to understand all that is at stake. So in our text for today, Jesus presses home the importance of acknowledging Him before others even when it is hard.

He begins with a tremendous note of encouragement, saying in verse 8, *“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God.”* In other words, confessing Christ to people who hate Him is not easy, but it’s worth it. Here, **Jesus promises to herald our names in heaven if we will herald His name in on earth...** that if we will take the risk, He will give the reward... that if we speak His name on this day, He will speak ours on the ultimate Day.

This, then, is the three-pointer at the buzzer in the NBA Finals... it’s the field goal to win the Super Bowl... it’s the putt on the 18th green to win the Masters. The chance to testify boldly for Christ in the midst of opposition is an incredible opportunity to accomplish something that will never be forgotten. Whereas the victories of Napoleon, Patton, Tiger Woods, and Michael Jordan will be forgotten, those who stand for Christ will stand for eternity.

O, how I pray we will hear the exhortation of Christ this morning! As opportunities to share Christ arise before us—even when doing so is hard—I pray we remember this text and hear Christ saying, *“Go ahead. Tell them about me. It will be worth it, I promise! Your testimony today is pure treasure in heaven.”*

Any worry that you may have committed blasphemy of the Holy Spirit this sin is ample evidence that you haven’t, for those who actually have committed it could not care less. In fact, they would be glad to be accused of it because they would believe blaspheming the Holy Spirit is the good and right thing to do.

So in verse 10, Jesus gives us yet another good reason to be fearless in our telling others about Him. He is telling us to testify without timidity because He is working His justice through us. There is the justice of forgiveness for all who will receive the sacrifice of Christ. And there is the

justice of divine judgment for those who persecute us for our message. In essence, Jesus is saying: “Speak my name fearlessly! If people listen and repent, I will joyfully forgive them of any evil things they have spoken against me. If, on the other hand, they harden their hearts and refuse to submit to the call of the Holy Spirit and harm you for your faith, then they will surely receive the punishment that such rebellion deserves.”

As we conclude, then, the whole conversation comes down to this: *When the time comes to confess Christ, what will we say? Will we bow down to the fear of people, or will we stand strong in the fear of the Lord? Will we choose comfort on **this** day or commendation on **that** day? Are we willing to risk what is easy for that which is eternal?*

At the Diet of Worms, Martin Luther’s life was on the line. And, standing boldly for the truth of Christ, God used Luther to change the world. Indeed, in the end, there is one and only one thing that can and will change the world—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By a grace more amazing than we can imagine, God has made us His ambassadors and has called us to make known His Gospel.

So don’t be a hypocrite, speak! ... Fear God, not man, and speak! ... Store up treasures in heaven and not on earth, and speak! ... Make Christ’s offer of forgiveness known and speak the name of Jesus and the Gospel of His grace! If our text for today does not motivate to reach out to lost people around us and send forth the Good News of His death and resurrection, I dare say nothing will.