

January 1, 2022 - January 2, 2022

### **I Pledge Allegiance, to the Christ**

Now 3 weeks ago pastor in his sermon spoke about a young man that was going into the ministry and said he'd be giving a sermon the next weekend (New Years'). I am that young man and yes, it is not New Years'. Now the only problem with that is this was a New Years' sermon. So, in conclusion, we're all gonna pretend it's New Years' again. Try to get back in that mindset (Resolutions remark). Thank you.

Happy New Years to you all! Let me tell you, I'm certain this will be a good year... yeah, is what I've been saying for the past 4 New Years'. We've seen so much hatred, division, violence, and suffering online and maybe even in our own lives. All the good news feels like it's been trampled over by the bad news to where it's hard to even see or hear any. Everything's always changing. It feels like every year presents itself with more chaos than the last. But who knows? Maybe this is the year. Either way, you know what hasn't changed over the years? The fact that Christ died for you. The fact that Christ loves you. The fact that no matter how dark your past or present may be, God adopts you wherever you're at in life and He helps you to venture forward to something more, someplace better, a perfect place in Christ Jesus.

Some of you may know my name or who I am, and to those people I truly apologize. But my name or who I am is of no importance to you all today, what is important is the message I bring to you.

Last week (3 weeks) if you attended service, you'll remember Pastor saying and I quote "Having a critical spirit is just the opposite of compassion". These words cannot be more true. Now this is no excuse to be cookie-cutter and dial down truth to where it can no longer be comprehended so you don't offend anyone. What it means is that a spirit that is only critical is of no help to anyone. Truthfully critiquing is only part of the equation. Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Right? First we must be sure that these critiques are valid, and proven to be true. Then we are called to speak the truth in love!

Paul speaks about this in Ephesians 4:15 saying we are to be "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ." God loves us but He does not approve of our sin; love does not require approval. That is a false new age belief; get that out of your head! Paul talks about the unity of the Church and how Christ has given us the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers whose responsibility is to equip God's people to do His work and build up the Church, the body of Christ. I feel that's why I've come to preach to you today.

### **Teaching:**

My sermon title today is "I Pledge Allegiance, to the Christ". What does it mean to pledge allegiance? What comes to mind when you hear the word "allegiance"? Maybe loyalty? Obedience? Sacrifice? Trust? All of these are fair descriptors of allegiance that we can use to define it, but how does allegiance to Christ play out? What does it look like? How do you know you are being truthful to your pledge of allegiance to Christ Jesus?

Well, let's look where not enough people today look for answers shall we? In your Bible if you open up to Matthew Chapter 5, you'll see Jesus just being Jesus and giving the greatest sermon anyone in history has ever preached. Known as the "Sermon on the Mount". If we fast forward a bit to Chapter 7, we'll see Jesus finishing His sermon. Verse 15-20 will be our main focus.

Jesus here is warning us about false prophets. But why? Well, if you look at the passage above, you'll see Jesus talking about a narrow gate that we should pass through. Now if you read The Gospel According to John (which I'm sure all of you have right?) you'll realize Jesus here is talking about Himself, that's why the gate is narrow because there is no other way to enter the kingdom of Heaven except through Him. Ah. How are we to find and navigate this narrow path? Well surely we would look to the messengers of God to guide us.

Now knowing this, let's read verses 15-20. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits."

By their fruits. So why do I bring up prophets to get a key factor of allegiance? Because of Isaiah! If you read the book of Isaiah you'll see God confirmed that Isaiah was indeed a true prophet and when we read Isaiah 45:23 he writes "To Me (referring to God) every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance". Isaiah being a

confirmed true prophet of the Lord most definitely pledged his allegiance to Christ. Jesus (God) states that “prophets” that do not produce good fruit are actually false and will be thrown into the fire. So it seems a key factor for true allegiance, is a person’s fruit.

Now there is another place in the Bible where Jesus talks about our fruit. In John 15:5-11, Jesus tells us “I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” Okay, so from this we see that good fruit we produce is because we are connected to the vine that is Christ Jesus. It is faith in Jesus that we are connected to Him, are crucified on the cross with Him, and bestowed His righteousness (by Him). Now we see that in order to have good fruit we must have faith in Christ Jesus, making faith a key factor in allegiance.

Now faith and fruits. That’s consciousness and actions. That’s the core of being. So what does allegiance to Christ look like? True allegiance to Christ is when our faith in Jesus Christ works in us so that we bear good fruit. That's what it looks like. Jesus + Faith = Salvation + Good Fruit.

Now if anything I need you to remember this, this is something that is part of our core beliefs in this church. This has been debated for a long, long time, before any of us. Your works are not the root of your salvation, they are the fruit of your salvation. You are saved by grace through faith. The thief on the cross when he responded in faith to the message of salvation was taken into paradise that very day. Good works are a result of genuine faith. Works are not required to be saved, but they are an indicator of a living or a dead faith. (And if you know the book of James, you do NOT want a dead faith)

Now earlier I know I said all dumbly “But my name or who I am is of no importance to you all today, what is important is the message I bring to you.” Well, now that is true. But I’m in the message so you’re learning a little bit about me either way.

Being serious I am not the main character in this story, and it does not revolve around me; please don’t get that confused. I would like to share a short testimony about my friend’s conversion and how I was a witness to it.

My friend and I, in the year of his conversion, had known each other for about a decade. We had only liked each other for about 5-6 years. God had this happen in a very weird way. Junior High. We were involved in the same friend group (so not really friends yet) and some of the guys in the group were making fun of me and one of my family members. So in the hallway I had gone up to this one individual and shoved him into the locker telling him if he speaks on that one family member again, I’ll be kicking his butt and repenting later. My “friend” saw this and he ran up and hit me in the back of the head with his binder into the locker. Now my friend didn’t do much homework so you better trust that binder was THICK. It hurt bad. I got up and continued to chokeslam him as you

would see in WWE. The bell rang for class and then it was just me and him in the hall. I reached out my hand and he grabbed it and I picked him up. We apologized, went to class, didn't speak again till high school. Boys will be boys I guess. In High school, we had the same classes so we talked because we knew each other and a bond formed. Junior year is when I started trying to have deeper conversations with him. I asked questions like "Do you believe in God?" His response was always I believe there's more than what we see, but I'm not sure. In other words, agnostic. He didn't know if God did or didn't exist. Now in my junior year of high school, I went on a mission trip that completely broke me in the best way possible. Completely changed my perspective and life. When I got home I was pumped. I was gonna go and spread that gospel and get closer to Christ than I ever have before! Then I got distracted for a year because I started dating a girl from the mission trip. Fast forward. My friend out of high school was struggling terribly. He suffered from grief over loved ones, breaking down of relationships, just trying to cope. Now at this point I had had it! I realized there was nothing I could do besides share the gospel with him. I put him in the car and brought him here to Josiah. Josiah and I collectively worked with him for about a year straight. Long hours, an excruciating amount of questions, and my little amount of patience. Every week we'd come here to meet and talk. I showed him Jesus as he already knew him (please remember this and use this yourselves). Jesus calls himself the way, the truth, and the life. I used that to our advantage. He believed specific morals were objective so there was a right way to live, he believed there was such a thing as truth, and he believed there was more to life than just what we see. In some way he already knew Jesus. It was just time for him to officially

meet Him. He said he was wanting to learn who this Jesus person was. Then the day happened, where I knew he was close. We had left Josiah's office and we were heading out. I stopped and told him "hey, I'm gonna go pray in the sanctuary. You're more than welcome to come in and just sit down till I'm done or you can go to the car." I went into the sanctuary, kneeled on the altar steps, and I prayed to God saying "Lord I know he's so close, I can feel it, please Lord, I know you, and I know you won't miss this opportunity to reveal yourself to him and adopt him into your family." I opened my eyes and I was frozen by the glory of God. My friend was kneeling right next to me on the altar steps. Eyes closed, hands put together, praying. He was not yet a Christian. But Christ was with him. It was only a matter of weeks till he converted and was baptized.

This my brothers and sisters was a successful conversion. He pledged his allegiance to Christ and rejected the enemy. One inspiration he always tells me was that he was jealous of my faith. He was jealous of my relationship with God. My friends, don't you see that your proclamation of and allegiance to Jesus Christ can shake an unbeliever's heart?

Now, notice what was not in my friend's conversion story. Me shoving the Bible down my friend's throat. Don't you see that people who do not believe do not hold the book as an authority? Excuse me for my tone but I get very passionate about this topic. I've never seen so many people hurt wrongly by people in the Church who are supposed to spread truth in love. It is as if some of us have regressed to the false notion of the Jewish people in the Old Testament thinking they were superior to everyone else. Hear me when I say this, **WE CANNOT BOAST ABOUT A FREE GIFT GIVEN TO US BY**

CHRIST. We should be HUMBLED by this and yet some of us still prop ourselves up to be superior to everyone else. It's ridiculous and it's unbiblical. Hear me and hear me clearly, 99% of the time the only two persons you should ever shove a bible in the face of is 1) the devil when he's talking to you, and 2) the person in the mirror when they start listening. Why do we see the speck that is in our brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in our own eye? Or how can we say to our brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is a log in our own eye? Us hypocrites, we need to first take the log out of our own eye and then we will see clearly to take the speck out of our brother's eye. I messed up along the way but whenever Josiah and I were making ground with my friend, it was by speaking truth in love. Not by ridiculing and having a superiority complex. Not by speaking in a critical spirit that lacks compassion.

\*Story about me and my Father\*

My brothers and sisters, go read the word of God. You will know if I am speaking to you or not by the conviction of the Holy Spirit. If you truly believe in the God that made all of this, why don't you read His word? Please don't think I am speaking down on you. I ask myself this same question.

We have a chance in this new year to make the world a better place, starting with ourselves. Set up a plan to read the Bible, or maybe just the New Testament, or maybe just a gospel. Read something! This new year, don't be afraid to show love to others, don't be afraid to spread the gospel, don't be afraid to pray in public, don't be afraid of the lies satan feeds you, don't be afraid of those who can't kill your soul, and DON'T be afraid to be honest with God (hint hint he already knows so you might as well tell him).



Pledge your allegiance to Christ, pray without ceasing that you may bear good fruit and water seeds Jesus has planted in others. Analyze yourself and be willing to cut off the branches that bear bad fruit. Don't exalt yourself saying "God, don't worry I got this, you can function over here, but this is mine." God is not a tool. Don't believe in a convenient Jesus who just happens to think the same way as you. Don't put God in a display case written on it "break in case of emergency". Pledge your allegiance to Him and seek Him always. Pastor recently has made it known and wants it to be very clear that God sees us as saints, that's how Paul wrote his letters he'd write "To the saints..." and I am here to tell you let's start acting as such.

My dear brothers and sisters, my friends, my family. These last few years have been pretty rough, but please don't give up hope. For even though it may be a new year, do you know who hasn't changed? The author of Hebrews does.

Hebrews 13:8-16 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace, not from rules about food, which don't help those who follow them. We have an altar from which the priests in the Tabernacle have no right to eat. Under the old system, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, and the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates to make his people holy by means of his own blood. So let us go out to him, outside the camp, and bear the disgrace he bore (let's not just go to church, let's BE THE

CHURCH). For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God." Amen and Amen.

May God be with you all this new year and may you all be with God.