

The great hymn of the Reformation, A Mighty Fortress, which we will sing later on, is in the section of our hymnal under the heading, “The Church Militant.” From this we get our word military. This hymn, along with all the others in that section, speak of the fight, the struggle, and the battle in which we who are Christians are engaged. This battle is not in the past, nor is it in the future. All these hymns are in the present tense. The struggle is happening now. To be sure, it has gone on in the past, and it will continue in the future, yet only if we engage the enemy in the present. If we choose to lay down our weapons and take our rest, the battle right then and there is over. The enemy will have won.

There will be a time when we can lay our weapons aside. That time is coming, but is not yet here. We will sing of it next week on All Saints’ Sunday. Our hymns will come from the section, “The Church Triumphant.” We will sing of the saints who have gone before us, who now rest from their labors, who did engage the enemy while they lived in the present, and who refused to lay aside their weapons until the day their Lord called them to their eternal rest.

Yes, All Saints’ Day is coming. But today is Reformation Sunday. “Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest.” But now in the present, “Rise! To Arms! Wisely fight for time is fleeting!”

And so, Jesus in our text, does not tell us, “If you did abide in My Word,” nor even, “If you will abide in My Word,” but He uses the present tense, “*If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*”

To abide in Jesus’ Word is to engage the enemy with the only weapon that can defeat him. For to abide in Jesus’ Word is to abide in Jesus.

To this you are called in your baptism. In these sacred waters Jesus joined Himself intimately to you, with the promise that He will never forsake you; He will never turn against you; He will never un-join Himself from you. Your baptism places you into Jesus, into His death and resurrection for you. Your baptism clothes you with Christ. It covers you with His innocence. To abide in Jesus’ Word is to abide in your baptism.

To abide in Jesus’ Word is to gladly hear the words of Jesus; to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them. As my dad’s death drew near because of his cancer, he spent hours each day in his easy chair reading his Bible. What a powerful witness that was for me! He knew the Scriptures well, for he had been a pastor for many years. And still he knew that he was not yet in the Church Triumphant. He was still in the fight. He read his Bible not because he had to, but because he wanted to. He loved the words of Jesus as all true saints do. To love Jesus’ Word is to love and abide in Jesus.

To abide in Jesus’ Word is to abide in the word of forgiveness – the spoken Word of Absolution. Now in the present, we struggle with temptation. Our flesh is weak and we daily fall into sin. And so, Jesus directs, yes commands your pastor to declare to you that all your sins are forgiven. He accomplished this by His bloody death on the cross. And He did this for you. The word of

forgiveness your pastor speaks to you is the word of Jesus to you. To abide in Jesus' Word is to abide in His forgiveness.

To abide in Jesus' Word is to eat and drink His Supper. "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood,*" He says, "*abides in Me, and I in him.*" This holy meal is for your assurance. Every time you receive His body and blood, Jesus assures you that He has not forsaken you, that your sinfulness cannot drive Him away from you. He delights in coming to you, yes into you, to abide with you. To abide in Jesus' Word is to eat and drink His Holy Supper.

Now when Jesus, in our text, tells the Jews these things, they do not take kindly to His words. They "*had believed in Him,*" it says. But it is a superficial faith that they have, not an abiding faith.

What about us...you and me? Should we have concerns about our faith? It is true, and you know this as well as I, that none of us abides in Jesus as we should. Rather, each and every one of us has, from time to time, taken our rest and laid our weapons aside. If we were able to accurately measure our faith, we would all have concerns, grave concerns.

But Jesus does not call us to abide in our faith, but in Him. And so, He gives you His Word, Baptism, Forgiveness, and His Supper. These holy things restore your faith even when you falter. Look on these things and be strengthened, for these are your weapons. Abiding in them, you abide in Jesus. Keeping these weapons at your side, you will be transferred, when the day comes, from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. Amen.