

The theme for our meditation is “God upholds for those who suffer for his sake.” Today we also celebrate the Communion of Churches in India (CCI) consisting of CSI, Marthoma and the CNI. Our meditation this morning is about those who are willing to suffer and die for the sake of the Gospel and how God upholds them. The Gospel readings warn us that there will be a time before the coming of Christ when there will be intense persecution and total social chaos. Even as we look around our world today the birth pangs of the final coming of Christ has already begun. There is tremendous social chaos in many parts of the world, whether it be Iraq or Syria or Afghanistan or Pakistan or South Sudan or Palestine or any part of the world. We constantly hear of internal conflicts and wars. Moreover, the Bible tells us that believers who stand up for the Lord Jesus and testify to his name will face opposition, suffering and even martyrdom.

In the reading from Luke’s Gospel, Jesus talks about the events that will take place before his final coming and what we need to be doing as his followers. Jesus tells them that the disciples will first hear of wars and uprisings, but they are not to be alarmed with these events. Nations will rise against nation and kingdoms against kingdoms. There is a breakdown of civil order and a tremendous sense of terror and emotional trauma. The disciples are not to be disturbed or surprised by such events. When we look around the world today we see signs of social chaos. Natural disasters like tsunamis, earthquakes, floods or famines are heard at regular intervals. New diseases like dengue and chickengunia seem to be plaguing us. Society also has been in chaos with brutal murders, rapes and robberies in our own city as well. Jesus has already warned that these will be signs before his second coming.

Another key warning that Jesus gives his disciple is that they will be persecuted and put into prisons and brought before kings and governors because of his name. They will end up in a variety of hostile settings with the opportunity to defend their confession. So when we face persecution we must remind ourselves that Jesus has warned us about these.

As far as our own preparation is concerned Jesus tells us not to be worried about how to defend ourselves. Jesus offers a promise of giving us words and wisdom that none of our adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. Opponents will be left silent by our replies just as Jesus left his opponents silent. Moreover, it is the work of the Holy Spirit who will enable us to answer boldly. He will be the one giving us strength to speak with courage and confidence.

Jesus warns us that there will be division in the family and one will be betrayed by their own family and friends. The disciples will be the object of intense rejection because of their confession of Christ. However, Jesus shows that despite the hatred and potential death, final destruction is impossible for the disciples. While the disciple loses his life physically he is granted eternal life. Divine protection and presence are promised for the disciples. God upholds those who suffer for his sake.

As disciples we are called to stand firm in our faith and persevere till the end in order to gain eternal life. May God the Holy Spirit sustain us on the day of persecution and rejection that we may stand firm till the end so that we may receive eternal life.