

## Exaudi, A✠D 2008

**John 15:26 - 16:4** "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. <sup>6:1</sup> "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. <sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. <sup>3</sup> And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. <sup>4</sup> But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Our lives are built around comfort. We want comfortable cars, comfortable houses, comfortable clothes. When you're feeling a little down or under stress, there are plenty of so-called comfort foods to make you feel better. On a vacation, you can stay at a Comfort Inn; after a hard day at work, you can sip some Southern Comfort. There are comfort beds, comfort bicycles, comfort class in an airplane, even comfort settings on your thermostat. If something might make you—God forbid—uncomfortable, all you've got to do is splurge a little and you can buy comfort. After all, you deserve it, don't you?

2 But despite the trend in many churches to cater to the comfort of their parishioners, the Church has never been about comfort. Not according to St. Peter, at least, who warned about the coming "fiery trials," about sharing in Christ's sufferings, and about being insulted for the name of Christ. Comfort is not the way of the Church. The way of the church is foolishness, in the eyes of the world. People will look at you like you're nuts for giving away ten percent of your income to the church and for squandering Sunday mornings in church, money and time that could be better spent in many other arenas. Your neighbors will look cross-eyed at you for refusing to participate in gossip sessions. You may be mocked at school because your parents won't let you watch Family Guy, buy Grand Theft Auto IV, or listen to sexually explicit or derogatory music. You might get passed over for promotions for not being willing to stab your co-workers in the back or for refusing to work late evenings at the expense of family time. Truth is, you could be far, far more comfortable outside the church.

3 That's not even the worst of it. It's one thing to be mocked by those outside religious circles; it's an altogether different thing when the persecution comes from those religious. "They will put you out of the synagogues," Jesus warned His disciples. "The hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God." Not only would the disciples be persecuted by the world, but those persecuting them would suppose that they were doing service for God. They would be killed, not seemingly unjustly, but as if their

deaths were what they had rightfully coming to them. This is the way it is with the Gospel. If you contend that Jesus is the only way to salvation and there aren't numerous paths to heaven, the world will revile you as a service to their pluralistic god. If you call sinners to repentance, the world will cast you out of its synagogue and tell you to mind your own business. If you believe that God would consign Himself to work through ordinary things like water, wine, bread, and the spoken word, even some in the church will try to defend God and tell you not to put Him in a box.

4 The comfort the world offers anyway is fleeting. No matter how comfortable you make yourself now, any earthly comfort is temporary at best. Sin and self-indulgence, however pleasant for the time being, will leave you eternally comfortless in hell. Jesus warned his disciples of the coming persecution to keep them from falling away. So repent of seeking worldly comfort. Repent of fearing persecution from the world. Repent of avoiding the discomfort of bearing the name of Christ. Repent, and rejoice that the discomfort and persecution the world seeks to inflict is nothing like the comfort Jesus promises.

5 No comfort: not from the world, not from the religious elites. But Jesus does promise comfort. Or, rather, He promises the Comforter, the Helper, the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." The disciples would be caught in the loneliness between the Lord's ascension and the descending of the Holy Spirit. But you are not. The Holy Spirit has come. And He bears witness about Jesus.

6 That's the Holy Spirit's job: to point to Jesus. He points to the Jesus who bore human flesh in the womb of the Virgin. He points to Jesus who grew up and began a ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and giving life. He points to Jesus who was brought up on false charges and sentenced to death. He points to Jesus who was nailed to a cross and hung to die. He points to Jesus who died and was buried. He points to Jesus whose death was the payment for the world's sin. He points to Jesus who rose, ascended, and sits at the right hand of the Father. He points to Jesus, bears witness about Jesus.

7 That's how He gives you comfort, by pointing you to Jesus. The Holy Spirit has come to point you to Jesus, to bear witness about Jesus in your life, by joining you into the death and resurrection of Jesus in the waters of Holy Baptism. He gives you comfort by making the reality of Jesus' death your reality. In the death of Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives you comfort. You need fear no eternal discomfort, or worse, eternal separation

from God in hell. For you, Jesus bore the discomfort, the agony, the worst the world could muster against you in your place.

8 You have comfort. You have more comfort than you could ever find in the world's vain comforts. You have the comfort of belonging to the Lord who willingly died and rose for you. You have the comfort of knowing that He has defeated death, overthrown the devil, and shattered sin's stronghold on you. You have the comfort of clinging to the Word of God, the very Word which declares you righteous and forgiven. You have the comfort that He who did not spare His own life but gladly gave it up for you will graciously keep you in His care. You have the comfort that the Holy Spirit who delivered to you His gift of faith also zealously guards that gift. You have the comfort that the Lord sends out ministers to speak words of comfort to you, words of forgiveness, the word of Holy Absolution.

9 And you have comfort food, too. Jesus gives you His very body and blood. His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink, He promises. When the world would offer you comfort that vanishes quickly, Jesus offers comfort that lasts, the comfort of sins forgiven, the comfort of a meal of salvation. The crucified, risen, ascended Lord has not left you alone, has not left you as orphans. He is present in this meal—as present as his body that was hung on a cross—to give you His real body and real blood. In this food is comfort for life eternal.

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
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