

Turn to Jesus when the World Turns on You

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] John chapter 10, verse 22 through 42 will be the text from this morning's sermon.

! If you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together.! At that time, the feast of dedication took place at Jerusalem.

It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said, How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe them because you are not among my sheep.

My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

[1 : 14] I and the Father are one. The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father.

For which of them are you going to stone me? The Jews answered him, It is not for good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said you are gods? If you called them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, you are blaspheming, because I said I am the Son of God?

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.

Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained, and many came to him, and they said, John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true, and many believed in him there.

[2 : 24] May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated?

Recently, Anchored North produced a three-part discussion between a progressive and conservative Christian.

Here's a summary of that discussion. A progressive Christian and a conservative Christian came together to see if they could discuss human sexuality with authenticity, love, and truthfulness.

Can they overcome the stigma and speak to one another with understanding? And so in the conversation, Owen Strand is the conservative Christian.

He's an associate professor of Christian theology and the director of the Center of Public Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He's authored many books.

He's spoken at many events. The progressive pastor is a man named Colby Martin. He's the founding and leading pastor of Sojourn Grace Collective in San Diego, California, and likewise is an author and has spoken at many events.

[3 : 37] Their discussion is peaceful. Nobody raises their voice. No one gets angry, and it's about a three-hour-long discussion.

But it's clear throughout the conversation that these two men have, both claiming to be Christians, that they do not share the same views on important matters that the Bible addresses.

You can watch the discussion for yourself. I encourage you to. It's on YouTube. And if you do, you'll discover that over the course of the conversation, Owen, the conservative Christian, uses the Bible.

The points and the arguments, the claims that he makes are established in that conversation not based upon his opinion, but based upon what the Bible says.

On the other hand, Colby, the progressive Christian, makes many of his points and claims not using Scripture, but stating how he thinks or how he feels.

[4 : 43] And so a lot of his statements begin with phrases like, for me, or to me, or I think. At one point in the conversation, the progressive Christian says this about the Bible.

I don't believe there is a divine document out there that lays out a being's preferred order of things. And throughout that conversation, this Christian pastor spends most of his time trying to discredit the Bible.

Then in the third part of the discussion, after Owen Strand explains how the Bible shapes his knowledge and understanding of God and what is true, Colby, the progressive Christian, says to him that he doesn't think that Owen's way is a sufficient way to know God.

And he says to him, there's just no way that you can be right. Again, this is a Christian pastor spending most of his time in the discussion discrediting the Bible and rooting his arguments and his claims and his beliefs not in, thus says the Lord, but this is what I think.

Tragically, many Christians in the United States share that same view. This past September, Ligonier Ministries conducted their biannual State of Theology survey, a survey that's conducted nationwide which revealed concerning results.

[6 : 36] You can view those results online and I encourage you to do that too at thestateoftheology.com. But I want to share a couple of those results with you this morning as we make our way to the text that I'll be preaching from.

The survey found that 30%, 30% of evangelicals deny the deity of Christ. 30% of evangelical Christians deny the deity of Christ.

65% of evangelicals agreed with this statement. Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God. 65% That's heresy. They are saying that a heretical statement is true.

1,700 years ago at the Council of Nicaea, church leaders met from around the region and overwhelmingly affirmed there the deity and eternal existence of Jesus Christ and defined the relationship of the Father and the Son as one substance.

[7 : 52] A belief that came and comes straight out of Scripture, straight out of the text that I'll be preaching from this morning. Jesus says, I and the Father are one.

Dr. Stephen Nichols, Ligonier's chief academic officer, said this about the survey's findings. As the culture around us increasingly abandons its moral compass, professing evangelicals are sadly drifting away from God's absolute standard in Scripture.

The church does not have the luxury of idly standing by. This is a time for Christians to study Scripture diligently, engage confidently with people in our culture and witness fearlessly to the identity and saving work of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

So I have two concerns, at least two primary concerns from the results of that survey that I saw. First is the pervasive problem of biblical illiteracy in the church.

People in the church don't know what the Bible says. And so we need to be teaching the Bible as a church. We need to be encouraging Bible study and we need to be investing in the lives of our young people and their knowledge of God's Word.

[9 : 22] We do that here but also by sending them to camps. Some of the kids that go to camp whose parents don't go to church, that's the only time they're going to hear the gospel and it has an impact.

And for our teens, likewise, the same is true. We must be investing in them. And I'm so grateful that you have, that all of our teens that want to go to Falls Creek are able to go and we hope the same for our children because that's so important.

Second, this study shows that the church in the United States is heading in a disastrous direction. God's Word is a lamp to our feet. Discrediting God's Word and casting doubt over the Bible turns the lights out of the church, literally and figuratively.

The Holy Spirit will not be at work in a church that denies and discredits God's Word. And a church that denies and discredits God's Word has no message to share with the world.

Who's going to come to hear a message that means nothing? That church will shut down. So I believe that our culture is moving progressively in ways that we need to be aware of.

[10 : 37] And I believe one of those ways that culture is moving is to progressively see the Word of God as hate speech.

I think that that's where we're going. They already, we know, disagree with a lot of the values that we stand for that are based on God's Word. And I think that that time is coming.

Now that may, and I think it's coming soon. And that may sound like a drastic claim to you, but I want you to think about this. How many of you, how many of you five to ten years ago would have ever thought that a time would come in our culture where to say men are men and women are women would be considered a controversial statement?

Whoever thought that a time would come like that? But it's here. Our culture has lost its collective minds. They've been given over to a debased mind.

How should we respond? Post angry comments on Facebook so they can see it? Or Twitter? pray for God's wrath and judgment to be poured out upon them?

[11 : 59] How should we respond? What should we do? Well, the simple answer is to act like Jesus. That's how we respond.

We act like Jesus. And that's what we're going to see today. How Jesus acted in the face of hostility. So about two months have passed between verse 21 and verse 22.

Jesus, if you remember from last week, He's indicted the religious leaders of the Jews of being false shepherds. He's asserted that He Himself is the good shepherd who saves His sheep by calling them and by giving His life as a sacrifice to save them.

He is the one who should be trusted. That exchange, if you recall, resulted with further division among the people regarding Him.

Some said that He was demon possessed. Others acknowledged that no one could do the things that He did unless He was truly of God. And so now, two months later, Jesus is walking in the temple in Jerusalem.

[13 : 07] This is during the Feast of Dedication, which is the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, which celebrates the Israelites' victory over the Syrian leader, Antiochus Epiphanes during the time between the conclusion of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.

And so Jesus is walking here, and He's quickly surrounded by a posse of Jewish leaders who corner Him, who question Him, who threaten Him, and who attempt to kill Him.

They hate Him. They hate what He says. They hate what He does. They hate what He stands for.

This is cancel culture to the extreme. The way that Jesus responded to His opponents though back then is the way that we should respond to those who oppose Christ today.

As hatred of Christ and His Word intensifies, we need to know what to do. And what we need to do is to follow the example that Jesus has given us.

[14 : 28] This is the main idea of this morning's sermon. When the world turns on Christians, Christians must turn to Christ. When the world turns on Christians, Christians must turn to Christ.

So in this interaction, the Jewish leaders are seeking to intimidate Jesus and how He responds to each of their intimidating threats provides us with an example to follow when we face similar threats for our hope in Christ right now and in the future should things and persecution intensify here.

The first example that Jesus says that we need to follow is when interrogated, be confident in Christ. When interrogated, be confident in Christ.

Look at verse 24 again. So the Jews gathered around Him and said to Him, gathered around there literally means to surround or to encircle. The Pharisees have been identified by Jesus as wolves in sheep's clothing.

And here they act like a wolf pack, encircling their prey, using strength in numbers to single Jesus out and to make Him feel intimidated.

[15 : 53] But our Lord did not fear them because He did not fear men. So they ask Him, how long will you keep us in suspense?

If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Now here they ask a good question. In fact, it's the most significant question that anyone can ask.

Jesus, if you remember, asked it of His disciples. Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

However, their motivation wasn't to seek the truth, but to trap Him in a statement.

They were fishing. They were trying to bait Him, trying to get Him to say something that they could use against Him to get rid of Him.

See, they viewed Jesus as a threat to their power. His miraculous signs unsettled them. His rebukes of their hypocrisy angered them.

[16 : 54] And His claims to be God led to their conspiring together to put Him to death. So they see Jesus, they surround Jesus, cornering Him interrogating Him with a question to put Him on the spot.

To get Him to say something publicly that they could use as an excuse to arrest and kill Him. And so they chose in this instance to ask Jesus about His being the Christ.

Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. It was a title that contained a lot of political and military connotations in first century Palestine.

They could not, the Jews, the Jewish leaders especially, could not conceive or embrace the thought of a Messiah who would first be a suffering servant and who would not immediately usher Israel into a time of political and military dominance.

So Jesus was careful. He was careful to avoid these misguided understandings that were associated with that title. However, Jesus' miracles, His use of the Old Testament scriptures, His handling of other titles mentioned there were more than sufficient for the people to draw the connection that He was in fact the Christ.

[18 : 31] He's just told them in His explanation in John 9 of His being the Good Shepherd. That should have been plain enough to anyone with ears to hear and eyes to see to know what He was saying about Himself.

But the Jewish leaders couldn't see it and they didn't want to hear it. So they would have reason instead to turn people against Jesus.

But Jesus wouldn't fall for their trap and He wouldn't capitulate to the mob. Unlike how so many of our politicians and celebrities and athletes who come under scrutiny and attack of popular opinion and how they flip-flop whatever they said so quickly.

This past week there was a well-known Hollywood A-lister who made a comment about the escalating conflict in Israel and once that comment was out there and it was seen that most people in the United States didn't agree with what he was saying he flipped it and apologized but then when he apologized guess what?

Everybody else came after him how could you flip-flop and change your mind? It's capitulating to the mob. Jesus didn't do that. He knows the truth he remains confident in the truth in the midst of an interrogation in the midst of a threatening situation he not only is confident of the truth but he reminds his opponents of the truth.

[20 : 14] Look at verse 25 and 26 Jesus answered them I told you and you do not believe the works that I do in my father's name bear witness about me but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

Jesus has been plainly telling them this for three years. Look back in John 8 58 in another encounter with the Jewish leaders Jesus declared to them plainly truly truly I say to you before Abraham was I am using the covenant name of God so they picked up stones to throw at him but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple why did they want to kill him because they knew what he was saying about himself Jesus had revealed throughout his repeated words and works that he was the Messiah that he is the son of God that he is God in human flesh but as he confidently points out twice in his answer to his opponents here they would not believe their unbelief wasn't due to a repentance and faith it wasn't that they weren't told the truth but that they hated the truth those who hate the truth come up with their own version of the truth which can't be true the truth exposed their true nature it exposed their sin but instead of repenting and turning to

Jesus they exchanged the truth of God for a lie that's what people do that's what people do John chapter 3 verses 19 through 21 he lays out this very truth this is what happens and this is the judgment the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil for everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed but whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God if you read Romans chapter 1 verses 18 through 31 you see what happens when a collective group of people suppress and exchange the truth that God the source of all truth has revealed to them he gives them over to a reprobate or a debased mind and that's what we're seeing in our culture today when

God gives them over he withholds his grace he pulls it back and leaves sinful men to do what sinful men will do and so we have some pastors in churches today who call themselves Christians but who preach sermons where they spend most of their time discrediting the Bible that's what happens and then it becomes a controversial statement to say that men can only be men and women can only be women something that seems so clearly obvious they hate the truth we know and in

response if they don't respond in repentance and faith they gather around those who stand for and speak for this truth that they hate they gather around the church and how should we respond well again be confident in

Christ be confident in Christ and the salvation that you have in Christ look at what he says in verse 27 and 30 my sheep hear my voice and I know them we sing that song he knows my name does that get you sometimes that God the creator the author of all things infinitely holy and righteous knows the name of his sheep and loves them and they follow me I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one!

[24 : 41] will snatch them out of my hand my father who gave them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand I and the father are one and so you can be confident in the face of interrogation in Christ because as your good shepherd as we talked about last week he will never lose you nor leave you in these verses Jesus affirms the absolute and eternal security of all true Christians the sheep are called by the good shepherd and whom he calls they come and he keeps them it's his duty as the shepherd to protect his flock and he does he gives his sheep eternal life they will never perish you will never perish in Christ no one is capable of loosening his fingers on the firm grip that he has on you no one people can and they will like they did to

Jesus oppose the truth that has been revealed to us but we can't capitulate to them in fear but answer confidently in the truth that God has revealed to us in the reality that we know that we are his now and eternally there's nothing they can do to us to separate us from the love of God and we also have this in Luke 12 11 through 12 Jesus makes a promise to us that whenever we do face interrogation for our and the rulers and the authorities do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say this doesn't mean that you should be lazy and unprepared to give a defense of the gospel when called upon to do so God's word should continually abide in you through your study of it but in those moments when your faith is questioned and challenged you are told that no matter what the personal consequence or threat might be the

Holy Spirit the third person of the Trinity will be with you in it so the next time you are in a setting where either your faith is being challenged or you're in a group where questions or doubts are expressed about Christianity confidently lean into those conversations have those conversations don't run from those conversations don't capitulate either be confident in Christ state state the truth clearly and calmly don't forget that calmly and know that no matter what man might do to you they are not to be feared Matthew 10 28 Jesus says do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell when

I was a kid one of the first songs I remember singing in the church is this little light of mine and in that song what do we teach our kids let your light shine don't let anyone put it out don't hide in fear don't don't try to extinguish the light that the Lord has put in you let it shine let it shine and so I wonder if the future of our church who is our children and our teenagers will they see those who are presently leading the church letting their light shine confidently in Christ they're watching us they're watching you and let them see us be confident in Christ no matter what threats might come our way second example

Jesus gives us to follow when threatened stand for the truth when threatened stand for the truth and so Jesus says to them very clearly very confidently I and the father are one and the Jews in response picked up stones again to stone him and so for those Christians who participated in that Ligonier study they must not have read John 10 30 any time recently says I and the father are one and the word that Jesus uses there one in the Greek is in the neuter form which speaks of being one in substance Jesus is saying that he is united with the father in his divine nature and eternal essence that his words and his actions are totally aligned with the will of

[30 : 38] God the father so anyone who opposes him is opposing God the Jews were outraged by this they knew what he was saying and so they picked up stones threatening his life it wasn't for being a good moral teacher that they were outraged but that he said he was God which is exactly what they go on to say after Jesus answers their threats by standing for the truth look at verses 32 and 33 Jesus answered them I have shown you many good works from the father for which of them are you going to stone me the Jews answered him see they knew what he was claiming it is not for good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy because you being a man make yourself God!

Jesus didn't withdraw though he didn't soften his claim even when threatened instead again he confidently forced them to face with an answer for the plethora of evidence that they had witnessed of him his miraculous works which offered visible tangible inescapable proof of his oneness with God and thus proved that he wasn't a blasphemer rather that his opponents were they were and so he brought to their attention all the good things that he had done healing the sick feeding the hungry liberating the demon possessed and raising the dead and so what Jesus does here is to put his opponents in a spot where they stand in opposition to the good things that he has done for people and that's one of the major points or the vision for the engage events that we do back in Leavenworth when you know this came Nathan Gunter has been here and this was Nathan's vision that we his church and ours partnered together and he was getting me on board with just doing these outreach events engaging our culture what he told me about is you know I think of that high school girl who doesn't go up in a Christian home but who hears from culture and media and even in her schools that Christians are terrible people that you need to watch out for especially when she goes off to a secular university and what I hope is that through these events that she and people like her would see you know what you're saying we want people to see the good that we are doing in Christ's name that they would see us truly acting like Christ see the good that we are doing in his name and then be willing to hear what we have to say about him

Jesus further stands for the truth by drawing his opponents attention back to scripture Jesus answered them in verse 34 it is it is not written in your law I said you are gods if he called them gods to whom the word of God came and scripture cannot be broken do you say of him whom the father consecrated and sent into the world you are blaspheming because I said I am the son of God so the law here that Jesus is talking about is the Old Testament which the Jews prized and it used the term gods to refer to others than God himself and so this is a scripture that we need to give a little bit of attention to because it can sound confusing Jesus is quoting Psalm 82 6 there it says I said you are gods son of the most high all of you nevertheless like men you shall die and fall like any prince kings and judges are set up by

God and invested with his authority to lead read Romans 13 7 but God we know may revoke that authority at any time in Exodus 7 1 if you remember God says to Moses see I have made you like God to Pharaoh referring to Moses being the one whom God has is going to send to Pharaoh to act as his messenger to speak on his behalf with his authority and so Jesus point here is you charge me with blasphemy based on my use of the title Son of God yet your own scriptures apply the same term to magistrates in general if those who hold a divinely appointed office can be considered gods then how much more so can the one whom God has chosen and sent say that he is the

[35 : 54] Son of God so again Jesus would not be terrorized by their threats into silence he points them back to scripture to reveal their error and that they are not standing for the truth and that's what we need to do too how are we going to fight biblical illiteracy that poses such a great danger to the church well we must stand and correct heretical beliefs in the church our understanding of truth isn't based on what we feel or what we think but on thus says the Lord God's word is inerrant and if what you think opposes what God's word says then you're wrong let's let the Bible then resolve our disagreements within our church what does scripture say and let's not be terrorized into silence when opponents use threats to silence us like they tried to do with

Jesus Jesus wouldn't be silenced and he further stood by the truth or for the truth by drawing their attention back to the good things that he done as evidence that his claims to be one with the father were true in verse 37 he says if I am doing the works of my father then do not believe me but if I do them even though you do not believe me believe the works that you may know and understand that the father is in me and I am in the father and so like Jesus we must bear fruit actively putting our faith to work bearing fruit that testifies to the reality of the gospel's transformative power in us if they're going to hate us let's not let their hate keep us from doing the good that we've been called to do and keep us from hoping that as they see those good things being done that they will be convicted and they will be saved by

God as we have been saved though they once opposed him as we once opposed him you see returning hate with hate does not accomplish what God desires Romans 12 19 through 21 beloved never avenge yourselves but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord to the contrary if your enemy is hungry feed him if he is thirsty give him something to drink for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head a purifying act do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good though Jesus was threatened he stood by the truth

he pointed to the good things he done as evidence that his claims to be one with the father were true and so we should do the same standing for what is true no matter the threat pointing people to the word of

God especially those who claim to speak for Christ but who do so in error and pointing people to the good we do as evidence of God's transformative power in our lives so again we have a great opportunity to do that next weekend at Sunfest and if you haven't signed up already sign up what a great opportunity right here to be doing good things sharing the good news in our community third example Jesus gives us when faced with death hope in God when faced with death hope in God verse 39 it says and again they thought to arrest him but he escaped from their hands Jesus knew that his time would one day come to die but he knew that it would not come a moment sooner or later than God had ordained for it to happen and so you too can be confident of that same truth God had sovereignly ordained the salvation sanctification and glorification of his people you're going to be here as long as God wants you to be here not a second later or sooner and the good shepherd watches over you all the time psalm 139 16 your eyes saw my unformed substance in your book were written every one of them the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them that should give you hope that should give you hope in the face of death and confidence in Christ your standing for the truth in the face of threats in the face of death will inspire hope in others John Huss who lives from 1369 to 1415 was a

[41 : 19] Roman Catholic priest in Bohemia which is modern day Czech Republic he became a pre Protestant Reformation reformer of the church the more Huss read the Bible the more he noticed a sharp divergence between what the Bible teaches and what the Roman Catholic Church practiced and so he began to preach his sermons in the Czech language not in Latin but in the Czech language the common language so that his people would fully understand and hear the word of God he taught the authority of the Bible over church tradition and that Christ alone is the head of the church not the Pope and so for that he was excommunicated and he was commanded to come stand before the holy Roman emperor before the council of Constance to answer for his actions when he arrived at the council in Germany he was arrested and after refusing to recant his teachings he was burned at the stake these were his last words

Lord Jesus I endure this cruel death for you I ask you to have mercy on my enemies sound familiar sounds like Jesus he's acting like Jesus in the face of death however the followers of John Huss continued on and they set the stage for a man to come whose name was Martin Luther we sang one of his hymns today who was inspired by the writings of John Huss that he read and who was the spark that God used to ignite the Protestant Reformation a return to God's word in the truth that justification is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone prior to his death Huss told his executioners that they could burn this goose Huss his last name means goose in the Czech language but he said a hundred years later a swan would come whom they would be incapable of killing in 102 years after his death in Germany Martin Luther took his 95 theses and nailed it to the church doors in Wittenberg God works in mysterious ways doesn't he through those whom he saved through those who stand confidently in him and for the truth he's at work and this is our time this is our God ordained time to live how will you respond to the forces of darkness as they gather around the true people of God will you be threatened into silence or will you act like Jesus will you be confident in him will you stand for the truth and will you hope continually in God even though you may be threatened with death Jesus as he was led to the cross continued to stand confidently and to speak truthfully even as he hung on the cross he was not a coward he was brave and he died for us and we have this hope in the cross an instrument of death because there we know Jesus Christ the Son of God took our sins and died in our place but our hope isn't in a dead Savior but a risen Lord who on the third day came back to life as proof that all these things that he said that he was in scripture were absolutely true he is the

Son of God he is the way the truth and life he is the only one who can save us he is the good shepherd he is the door through Christ we have hope at all times Matthew chapter 5 verse 10 through 11 Matthew 5 verse 10 through 11 blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account listen to this rejoice when this happens rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you and so what I don't want to have happen is you all leave here and think oh great

[46 : 53] I am not looking forward to what's going on you should rejoice God is at work in this to purify his church and to strengthen his church to give bolder and greater testimony of the gospel that has saved us rejoice to join in the suffering of those who have come before us primarily in Jesus Christ our Lord rejoice that the Lord is still at work in his church purifying his bride preparing her for the eternity that he has for her rejoice and be glad and in the meanwhile stand for the truth be confident in Christ hope in him always don't live your life for this short time that we're here on earth think about the glory that is to come the time that we will spend in eternity with our

Lord and Savior the world is in desperate need of the church to be the church that God has called it to be let's strive to be that church three questions of application first question biblical illiteracy is threatening the church from within what action will you take to counter biblical illiteracy in your life in your home and in your church what actions will you take beginning with yourself moving on to your home and into your church question number two our culture is becoming increasingly hostile to the Christian faith how will you prepare yourself now to stand confidently in Christ when you are persecuted or put in a position to defend your faith how will you prepare yourself right now and then the third question what promises does

Jesus give to his true followers in this passage that you can hope in despite mounting opposition to the church and there is much that he has given us to hope in let's pray heavenly father we thank you that you set the example for us in all things that ultimately lord we thank you because you were willing to come you were willing to die you were willing to take our sins upon yourself and to become a curse on the cross that we would be saved and have eternal life lord you've told us repeatedly over and over again that you are the son of god that you are the savior that you are the messiah and you have told us to live our lives completely devoted to you and you have promised us that if we do so it will be totally and absolutely worth it so father help us to learn from your example if we are going to face mounting persecution right now then god encourage us to act like you to be confident in the truth to speak the truth to know the truth to share the gospel to hope in you always and lord we know that while persecution might be mounting here that it is on the scene in many other places in our world where people are facing the threat of death even now as we speak for gathering in your name and so lord we pray for them that they likewise would stand confidently in you that they would continue to give bold testimony that they continue to have hope in Christ that they would continue to share the good news that people would hear and that they would be saved father in the life that you have given us to live please be at work in our church to kingdom in Jesus name we pray amen