**With Jesus From the Beginning**

Based on [John 15:26-16:4](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn15.26-16.4)

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Seventh Sunday of Easter ~ Exaudi

Sunday after the Ascension

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This gospel is Jesus teaching his twelve disciples that they will suffer much when he is gone. They will be attacked for teaching what he has taught them, but he tells them before it happens so that they will know to expect it. He also promises to send them the Holy Spirit who will help them bear witness; and we have heard their witness as has been recorded in the Apostolic Scriptures of the New Testament; and we believe because we have heard what the apostles sent by Jesus, have taught and built the church upon.

These words of Jesus are not directed to us. Jesus says these thing exclusively to the twelve men he chose “from the beginning of his ministry to be his witnesses.” The apostles who saw Jesus as he would give sight to the blind, make the lame walk. **The twelve who dropped their nets and other jobs to follow him. The twelve who saw him preach the good news to the poor and fulfill all the signs of the messiah.** The apostles to whom he said “Upon this rock I will build my church, and I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven”. When Jesus ascends to heaven, and a cloud takes him from their sight, these apostles would see him no more. But he has prepared *them* for this, and that he will send the Spirit of Truth to help them bear witness to all he did and taught.

Jesus’ words in this gospel may not be directed to us, but they are in Scripture for us. For our comfort and assurance in the true faith. They teach us this important truth…Jesus taught the apostles and we can trust the apostles. Jesus says elsewhere, “**Many will come in my name saying “I am he”, do not follow them**” (Luke 21:8). We are not to believe everything we hear about Jesus; only what the apostles say about him. Jesus teaches us to believe in one ***apostolic*** church.

Many people claim to have knowledge about Jesus. The LDS Churches teach that Joseph Smith received special information some 1800 years after Jesus Ascended to heaven from an angel named Maroni. **He says that Jesus came to North America after his resurrection and taught the descendents of Jews living there, the present day Native Americans.** And they teach that there are always 12 Apostles that can authoritatively establish and correct teachings of the church. There are millions of people worldwide who believe these things, but the apostles never taught them.

Also, the church of the Pope and his Magesterium, they teach that Jesus wants us to pray to his mother Mary and other saints; that when believers die, most don’t go to heaven but have to “do time” in place called purgatory. **This time in purgatory can be lessened if they make pilgrimages, or reverence holy artifacts that have been assigned by the Pope a value in years credited against your sentence.** There are over a billion people who identify with the Roman Catholic church that teaches these things. But the apostles didn’t teach these things either.

How does the LDS church convince millions of people to believe and dedicate their life and spiritual salvation to something that the apostles never taught? Their answer is that the apostles did teach it, it’s only everyone forgot about it until Joseph Smith came to set things straight and the Mormon Church was formed. How does the Roman Catholic church convince more than a billion people to believe things the apostles never taught? Their answer is that the apostles did teach these things, and only the Magesterium – the Pope and Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, can tell you what the Apostles taught. There’s a common theme in both of these religious sects, both claim to have knowledge of what the apostles taught, without reference to the Scriptures they have written.

There is a reason why Jesus said the words of today’s gospel to the apostles only, it is so that we would look to no one else but them to believe what he taught. **The LDS Church and the Roman Catholic Church can phrase it however they want, but the bottom line is that Joseph Smith and today the twelve Mormon “Apostles” have made themselves equal to the apostles of Christ**. They even call their leaders the twelve “Apostles”. And the Roman Catholic church might phrase it however they want, but when it comes down to it, the Pope and his bishops have made themselves equal to the apostles. Do not believe them.

It is not for nothing that Jesus say to the twelve “**And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning**.” He said this because it was important that, whatever we believe about Jesus comes from someone who actually was chosen by him when he was on earth. Someone who saw him teach and do miracles, die and rise again. The 12 Mormon apostles didn’t; the Pope and his bishops didn’t. The 12 Apostles, to whom Jesus sent the Spirit of truth and who he sends to bear witness, they saw, heard, touched and knew Jesus on earth.

Someone would say, “If we don’t have 12 apostles today, then you have the same problem. If no one is an apostle then everybody is their own apostle. If we don’t have a pope, then everybody’s their own pope.” And that could be true. **Many people claim to know God, and hear from God directly and expect you to believe them. But here’s the difference. When someone claims to be teaching what the Apostles taught, and you say “why should I believe that?”, do they show you in the New Testament?** The Pope can teach Christ, but only by teaching the Scriptures. The Mormons apostles can tell what Christ has done, only by telling what the scriptures say he’s done. If they teach more or less, than they are claiming to be an apostle themselves. And they have no right. Because they were not with Jesus during his ministry on earth, and we have no right to believe they speak for Jesus.

All Christians today, in believing the apostles teaching, are like the executors of a will. If an executor divides up the inheritance a certain way, and one of the beneficiaries challenges it, the executor must take out the will, and point to the clause that says “**see, John Doe has written right here for his property to be distributed the way I have done it**.” The executor doesn’t get to correct the will, or say it is a corrupted text or written wrongly. He doesn’t get to say that there’s more to the deceased’s will than what is written. No, the one who wrote the will is dead, and the only authority the executor has is to execute the will as it has been written.

The Mormon church says that what is written in the NT needs to be corrected by the Mormon Church. **The Pope says that there are things the apostles taught that aren’t in the will.** We say that we know the apostles from what they have written, and it would be slanderous and wrong to teach things in their name that has not been written down.

There is much that Jesus says to the apostles that also applies to us through other scripture**. He promises the Holy Spirit to help the apostles witness, he promises you the Holy Spirit to help in you vocation.** He promises that the apostles will suffer for believing and teaching the gospel; so too Christians will likewise share in the suffering of Christ.

But take from the gospel this comfort. When you stand before God and he asks you why you dedicated your life to such teachings, you don’t have to say “the pope told me to” or “the Mormon apostles taught me about Jesus”. There are those who will only have such things to say, and the Lord will respond, “**Didn’t I tell you to watch out for those who teach falsely about me.**” But you stand upon the written words of the apostles, who taught that Jesus died for their sins on the cross, that he is the only mediator between God and man, and that once you die in faith, you won’t go to purgatory but will be with him that day in paradise. Jesus, who overcame the devil with the words “It is written”, has ensured his apostles wrote down for you the words you are to believe and live by, so that you can stand on the true foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone.