

- 1) *Witness*—to see and hear with your own eyes and ears.
Testify—to relate what you have seen and heard to others with your own words.
 Witnessing and testimony are ordinary/everyday activities—do it all the time.
 They are also essential/indispensable—what if you/others couldn't trade testimony?
 Under normal circumstance, rhythmic flow of give and take—Spirited Conversation.

- 2) Chances are, when I said W/T, called up for some mental pictures of special kind of W/T:
 A solemn, formal kind involving elaborate processes/high expectations:
 {Call of witness to the stand}
 Ordinary informal back and forth of W/T ramped up because stakes in trial are high:
 money and property, liability and liberty, guilt and innocence, life and death.
 So witnesses swear a solemn oath to undertake an impossible task:
 to tell not just the truth, but the whole truth, and nothing but the truth--
 “so help me God”---not immediately obvious how even God can help.
 As if to acknowledge that such a charge is a burden too great for any one witness,
 most trials involve not just one, but a whole parade—the hope being that,
 from all the bits and pieces of testimony, the judge/jury can piece together
 a reasonable approximation of the big picture they need to render a just verdict.
 Built into the system are processes designed to sort through the often complex/conflicting
 puzzle pieces that emerge from the testimonies of all the witnesses:
 objections and motions, cross examinations and rebuttal witnesses,
 opening statements and closing arguments.
 And, of course if I'm in court, and you're my attorney,
 it's your job to poke holes in the testimony of what are termed “the opposing witnesses”.
 Inherently adversarial system—winners/losers—very different from ordinary/everyday.

- 3) Similar set of dynamics occur before the court of public opinion. Obama/Cheney
 Appealing to same evidence, most of which is classified, coming to opposite conclusions.
 This is a contest that both cannot win—but everyone agrees the stakes are high indeed.

- 4) Adversarial systems for W/T may be necessary, even helpful, but come with cost:
 - Expectations (all too often justified) that W will have axe/special interest
 - Talking points for true believers—don't get off message by listening to other side
 - Handlers of W/ are paid professional persuaders (Sophists)

- 5) How do W/T operate in arena of religious convictions—issues of life/death?
 Often discourse highly adversarial
 - Talking points parroted by true believers—spiritual bomb to explode objections
 Many of us shrink from that kind of a stance, but it has a softer/subtler version
 - Targeted marketing—how make our brand attractive to those who are like us?
 If everybody goes to other churches, we won't be able to make budget.

- 6) Biblical materials related to W/T cover a wide spectrum—
 - Seldom adversarial (defense against charges / warning of immanent danger).
 - Never just a set of talking points for self-persuasion, suggestions to push a product.
 Particularly striking that don't use adversarial witness/testimony to “prove” Easter.
 How well would each of the acts of witness we heard today stand up in court of law?
 - ACTS: Something nobody saw, tell whole history—if anything recount disbelief.
 - 1 JOHN: Primarily testimony about testimony; bottom line—Eternal Life (Ex A)
 - JOHN: “Own words” transmitted—but argument (if that) goes in circle
 Such testimony would be thrown out of any law court
 Not surprising that it gets mixed reviews in court of public opinion

- 7) But there is (remember), that more fundamental notion of W/T—everyday/indispensable:
The back & forth of dancing Spirited Conversation—Let me try to show you what I mean:
{Concert Description} – “Wasn’t that fun!”
W/T not of litigation and lobbying, but of celebration and sharing.
“Evidence” if eyes/ears—but not to prove anybody wrong, rather to invite everybody in.
- 8) Singing is, in fact, an appropriate metaphor for what these texts are doing:
- ACTS: Incomplete Ensemble—need richness of distinctive voice for BLEND.
 - 1 JOHN: Repeated lines like the Handel aria Andy sang.
 - JOHN: Motifs circle through like rondo/ballad like group sang as last number.
- Not just pretty music—serious agenda, stakes are high—ARE confronting conflict
Still, important to remember what is going on—testimony of celebration and sharing.
The sort of thing we do in Memorial Day concerts and parades—
not our army can lick your army—but need to remember/reflect, be grateful/connected
- 9) {Other possible responses to the concert} rate w/ other concerts, physics more important.
Objections like that may HAVE a point, but such objections are BESIDE the point
Proof not possible if you refuse to entertain the possibility of singing in community.
Best advice—Listen to concert again; see what happens if you try to hum/pat/clap.
- 10) Sunday after Sunday come together to have our testimony brought to life by blending it.
Therefore we praise you . . . joining our voices with angels and archangels. . . .
Holy Holy Holy – Not stuffy spiritual superiority, but set apart to serve (chorus)
We find (as Biblical authors testify) that what is absurd in legal court, makes sense:
The whole truth/nothing but the truth---can’t do that—so HELP me, God.
God’s testimony becomes ours--song of God’s love for the world helps us lift our own voices.
Testimony not what one gives alone in a box while cross examined—chorus of witnesses.
Ascension—Jesus deliberate strategy not to allow himself to be a version of American Idol
where the best singer does it alone, and is validated by popular acclaim.
- 11) Epistemology of Easter Faith; but it does present a problem music can be mesmerizing—
think your song is only song--“my music better than your music”
What does it mean to bear witness to those who don’t hear and speak like we do?
How do you enter Spirited Conversation with those who have a different language?
Good question—Pentecost question—Come back next Sunday and we’ll testify to that.