

St. Stephen, 12-26-2025

1. Let's begin thinking about St. Stephen by looking at the gospel.
2. In it, Christ describes the rebelliousness of the Jews throughout their history. "BEHOLD, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city"
3. Toward the end of lesson, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Here we are pointed directly to Stephen who was stoned.
4. We see in this lesson that hate directed at the followers of Jesus is really hate for God.
5. The faithful bring the message of God's love to the world. They are ambassadors of God.

6. So when they are persecuted for it, that anger is ultimately directed at the one who sent these messengers.
7. We must also acknowledge that God sees the injustice that his messengers suffer, and God will repay those who persecuted His followers. God will judge the evil and wicked men.
8. We are not to presume to take the judgment of these wicked people on ourselves. We are to leave that to God. We know that justice will be done.
9. The challenge for us in the meantime is to wait on God and to love our persecutors.
10. God does not hate those whom He punishes. He loves them, but will not allow evil to go unpunished. Love does not ignore evil.
11. Stephen, as he is being killed, shows us how we are to act toward evil people. We are to pray that God would have mercy upon them. In other words, we are to pray that they would come to Christ for this is the only way in which God can completely forgive them.

12. Forgiveness is found in Jesus.
13. Difference between accepting persecution on a personal level and defending our families and communities, between enforcing the power of civil authority. Even in this we must be discerning. Kingdom of God, Christ, always takes precedence.
14. Extremely hard to endure persecution, to not strike back in anger, to actually be physically abused and killed. This is the path of the martyrs.
15. We should prepare ourselves in times of peace for enduring such persecutions. Remembering those who have suffered for Christ is vital in this preparation.
16. Which is why we remember the saints. Stephen as the first Christian martyr has a special place. The life of Christ incarnated in Him reminds us that that life will never again die.
17. Christ's incarnation is manifest in our suffering.
18. God grant us the grace to faithfully follow Jesus wherever he may lead, whether that be

suffering or prosperity. May all that we endure
be for the glory of God.

19. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of
the Holy Ghost. AMEN.

Hymns

172 The Son of God Goes Forth to War

275 Let Thy Blood in Mercy Poured

168 From All Thy Saints in Warfare