

July 3, 2022 St. Peter, Doss, TX “Being True to Your Faith”

Luke 10:1-20 *10 The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. 2 These were his instructions to them: “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So, pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. 3 Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. 4 Don’t take any money with you, nor a traveler’s bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. And don’t stop to greet anyone on the road. 5 “Whenever you enter someone’s home, first say, ‘May God’s peace be on this house.’ 6 If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand; if they are not, the blessing will return to you. 7 Don’t move around from home to home. Stay in one place, eating and drinking what they provide. Don’t hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve their pay. 8 “If you enter a town and it welcomes you, eat whatever is set before you. 9 Heal the sick, and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you now.’ 10 But if a town refuses to welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 11 ‘We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have abandoned you to your fate. And know this—the Kingdom of God is near!’ 12 I assure you, even wicked Sodom will be better off than such a town on judgment day. 13 “What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. 14 Yes, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you. 15 And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead.” 16 Then he said to the disciples, “Anyone who accepts your message is also accepting me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me. And anyone who rejects me is rejecting God, who sent me.” 17 When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, “Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!” 18 “Yes,” he told them, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! 19 Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. 20 But don’t rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.”*

The text is today’s Gospel that you just head read. Think about Jesus’ words in v.16 *Then he said to the disciples, “Anyone who accepts your message is also accepting me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me. And anyone who rejects me is rejecting God, who sent me.”* In Matthew’s Gospel, He says: (10:16) *“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.”*

Let me tell you about a 21st century story of a Christian Graphic Designer who Fears for Her Life as her Freedom of Speech Case Heads to Supreme Court

Lorie Smith left the corporate world in 2012 to form her own website design firm, 303 Creative, which soon flourished. But in 2016, she was asked to create a design conveying a same-sex marriage message that flatly violated her deeply held Christian faith.

Smith declined to do so and when it became clear a Colorado public accommodation law would be used to force her to create messages that she and other Coloradans did not support, or face harsh penalties, she decided she had to challenge the statute.

So, she turned to the federal court system to uphold her First Amendment freedoms. They did not and six years later the Supreme Court will be hearing oral arguments in her case later this year.

Now Smith fears for her life as she awaits the slow-turning of the wheels of justice—thanks to continuous terrifying harassment, including death threats, from activists seeking to suppress her Christian beliefs.

She said, “I have received phone calls; I’ve had mail show up at my home; I have had people wish me really vile things, things that should not be repeated, threats of bodily harm, some really vile things...When you hear the things that I’ve heard, it is terrifying. It definitely makes your skin crawl and the hair stand up.” (The Epoch Times.)

She added that “my clients have been harassed, and I love all of them dearly. They’ve received threats, as well as ultimatums, which has been difficult.” She said the ultimatums came from “the same groups of people who have been so hateful toward me, but they took it a step further. They figured out my clients’ contact information and harassed them as well.”

Smith’s comments came on May 18 during a discussion with reporters at the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) headquarters in the nation’s capital. Smith is being represented by ADF, an Arizona-based public interest law firm that specializes in First Amendment and religious freedom cases. Her case is 303 Creative vs. Elenis.

Kristen Waggoner, ADF’s general counsel, told reporters that Smith had to appeal her case to the Supreme Court despite the multiple facts both sides of the litigation agreed on

in the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. The 10th Circuit ruled against Smith and in favor of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission in a July 2021 decision in which the chief judge on the court dissented, calling the majority opinion “unprecedented” and “staggering” because the “Constitution protects Ms. Smith from the government telling her what to say ...” The chief judge also observed that, “Though I am loathe to reference [George] Orwell, the majority’s opinion endorses substantial government interference in matters of speech, religion, and conscience. Indeed, this case represents another chapter in the growing disconnect between the Constitution’s endorsement of pluralism of belief on the one hand and anti-discrimination laws’ restrictions of religious-based speech in the marketplace on the other.”

The judge was referring to Orwell’s famous quote that “if liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.” He added that quote to his dissent text.

The first of the essential facts in the case that both sides accepted, Waggoner explained, was “that Lorie’s religious beliefs are central to her identity and that she strives to glorify God in everything she does. The second is that Lorie works with people from all walks of life, including those who identify as LGBT.”

Waggoner said, “the 10th Circuit also agreed that Lorie, like every other artist, serves everyone. Lorie chooses whether to create websites based on their content, not based on the person that requests that content, and the 10th Circuit agreed with that fact as well. Lorie’s websites are protected speech under the First Amendment, and the 10th Circuit agreed with that.”

Even so, she said, “the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals held in a 2-1 decision that the government can actually compel Lorie’s speech, even though it admitted that her decisions hinge on what the message is in the speech and not the person who requests it.”

Her lawyer described the decision as “absolutely unprecedented,” and said “our government’s duty is to protect freedom, not to take it away. So, if the government has the power to force Lorie to speak a message, then it can force any one of us to speak a message.”

The Supreme Court accepted Smith’s case in February of this year. Waggoner said that law enforcement authorities will be contacted if Smith continues to receive harassment and threats.

Her lawyer said she will be filing briefs to the High Court next week, and Colorado will then have several months to reply. Amicus briefs supporting Smith are due June 2. Oral arguments could come as early as October.”

(By Mark Tapscott May 19, 2022 Updated: May 22, 2022, Epoch Times)

Our Lord said, “*Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.*” In our Gospel for today, Jesus says:

“Anyone who accepts your message is also accepting me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me. And anyone who rejects me is rejecting God, who sent me.”

In Revelation 2(10), Jesus said: *Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.* He is with us as He is with Lorie. Let us hold fast to our faith and relationship with Jesus.

I’ve been with you for over a year. Next Sunday will be my last Sunday and the installation of your new pastor. I wanted to say how much I appreciate all of you. If there were words to describe you, it would be kind and loving. You have blessed both Lin and me in our time together. I plan to come and visit you again on Sept.11, at the 125th anniversary celebration. I’ve enjoyed working with Max and all of our leadership. I want to thank Glenda and Adalie for helping the church sing. It has been an honor to serve you. God bless you with His mighty hand. Amen