

Celebration of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession

Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

*“ ‘a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—*

³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:32-39)

So, how do you celebrate it? It’s a pretty big date for you. Who knows where we would be today without it. It was June 25th, 1530. We can call that date the birthday of the Lutheran Church! On this day the Lutheran confessors stood before Emperor, Charles V, and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and papacy at the southern German city of Augsburg. There, these lay-members humbly and boldly presented their confession of the truth faith that God tells us clearly in his Word that all people are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in the Scriptures alone. Charles V had hoped that they could mend the division in the Roman Catholic Church. But these earthly powers—the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope—had no intentions of making any reforms to the Roman Catholic church and rejected this confession of faith. It soon became apparent that these confessors would not be able to rejoin a church that rejected God’s Word, Gods’ plan of salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ alone. And so, in this way the Lutheran church is born.

In some ways it’s sad. God’s truth was denied even as his messengers proclaimed it truthfully and faithfully. Division continued and would get worse. At the same time though, we do rejoice. We stand back in wonder that these reformers stood before the emperor and faithfully confessed the truth of Jesus just as Jesus had called them to do.

Many want to think that, of all the places where you could find peace and unity, it would be with religion. You may have seen these bumper stickers: “Coexist” with all those symbols from major religions making up the letters of the word. There’s

this hope and belief that we can all just get along for the sake of peace—just focus on the areas that we are alike and ignore those areas where we are not. But what did Jesus say in Matthew 10? **“Don’t even begin to think that I came to bring peace to the earth. I came to bring a sword!”** That might shock us a little bit. After all, we remember the message of the angels on the night he was born: Peace on earth! How can Jesus say that he didn’t come to bring peace?

When we reach this section of Matthew Jesus is in the process of sending out the Twelve disciples. Jesus had been in the northern territory of Galilee traveling through the villages. As he does this we hear how Jesus has compassion on them—his heart goes out to them. Why? He sees how lost these people are. He sees their burdened hearts and minds. He sees people who need to be saved. They need to know about their Savior. Jesus sees these people, all the work that needs to be done, and he chooses to send these twelve men to speak his Word, in His name, with His authority and His power. And through that spoken Word the Holy Spirit works to create faith, give forgiveness, and brings eternal peace. And so Jesus encourages his followers: **Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven** (v.32).

This is simply what believers do: they speak their faith in Jesus with the words from their mouths and the actions they do. This is what we are made for. As our Savior has compassion for all people, we have the same compassion—our hearts go out to them! We see people who are lost. We see others who are burdened. We have a deep concern for those who are lost in unbelief. Who is it you know that needs to hear about Jesus? Who is it you know has been wandering away from Jesus and needs the encouragement to come back? Maybe it’s your children, grandchildren. It could be your friend, colleague, neighbor, or other member of your family. Whoever it is Jesus sends you and me out to speak His Word, speak up for him with the full assurance that when the Last Day comes and he returns he will speak up for us. He will acknowledge us before His Father, “I know this one! He is my very own. She also belongs to me. I bought them with my own blood. I have taken away their sins. Look, there’s the places I prepared for them! In faith, this believer rejoiced to acknowledge me! Let’s bring them in to enjoy your happiness forever!”

Jesus sends us out with His Word with this sure promise. At the same time, make no mistake, being a follower of Jesus does not mean that life is going to be any easier for you. Quite the opposite. And before we start thinking that it doesn’t have to be this way, take a look at Jesus’ life. He’s rejected by the ones he came to save. He doesn’t live the most comfortable of lives but allows others to take care of him. What happens to Jesus, in the general court of this world, is hardly fair. Jesus is more than familiar with injustice. Laughed at, beaten, and executed; Jesus says that since these things happened to him, do not be surprised when they happen to you

as his follower. After all, the sinful mind is hostile to God. God's Word is utter foolishness to him.

So we go back to what Jesus said that he came to bring the sword. This is what he means! Yes, he brings us peace with God with the forgiveness of sins. But for many they don't want to hear this Word of Jesus. It's a double-edged sword that sharply cuts down the excuses revealing sinful hearts that cannot please God on their own. It slashes away any attempt to place the blame on to someone or anything else. Instead, it shows you as an individual are personally accountable to a just God. It deflects the lies mankind tries to throw up as a defense so we see the just God who will punish sin and unbelief. And most offensive of all is the truth that cuts the deepest that you cannot save yourself, make yourself right with God, or bring yourself closer to him by your own thinking or choosing. In fact, any attempt to do so leaves you worse off than before! The sinful mind wants nothing to do with any of this. And so it causes division.

Jesus knows this. He knows how difficult this can be. It's going to be felt even the closest of our relationships—father, son; mother, daughter; in your own household. Jesus describes it as a cross. This Christian cross isn't just any sort of difficulty or struggle we face in this world. It's what we suffer on account of bearing the name Christian. It's anything that might lead you to deny Christ and his Word. The Christian cross says, "No," to self and instead follows God's will for your life.

And it's hard; that's why it's called a cross. Some days, we feel that God is asking too much from us. We are afraid of what we might miss out on. We listen to the loud-clamoring of this world that life is all about the here and now and the not-too-distant future. We find ourselves looking for life and trying to find it in experiences for our children and ourselves. Life is about the success we can gain along with the accomplishments we might achieve. Life is about trying to get ahead a little bit further than yesterday. We don't want much; just a little extra to be comfortable. In and of themselves those things aren't necessarily bad. But, how often does saying, "Yes," to those things means saying, "No" to how Jesus has called you to live? How often do you find yourself chasing after those things while leaving behind Jesus?

We can say, "No," to a lot of people; others not so much. But who's the most difficult to say, "No," to? Me—yourself. Babies are the most selfish creatures—we never really grow out of it. After all, we are both sinners and saints and carrying that cross means killing that selfish sinful nature who is all about me. But so often, I just don't want to.

Then we get to speaking up about Jesus to those around us. Have you taken up those opportunities with your family member, friend, colleague, neighbor, or have you kept your mouth shut? We tell ourselves we are just waiting for the right

moment, but, if we are completely honest, it's because we are afraid of the cost. What is this going to do to our relationship? What is she going to think about me? What is she going to do? What am I going to lose? We might tell ourselves that your relationship with Jesus is a private thing—just between you and God. But then we hear these words from Jesus today and he calls us to acknowledge him before other people. We hear him say: **“Whoever loves anything, any relationship in this world more than me, is not worthy of me,”** and my heart grieves. Lord, have mercy on me a sinner. We have to confess that we have not always put God first. We confess that we have loved ourselves and been more afraid of whatever consequences might come from speaking up for the Son than we have loved the Son himself.

Thank the Lord that we are saved by grace alone. God knows we don't deserve his love and cannot make ourselves worthy. And still he loves you in spite of what you have done or not done and despite what we are by nature. That's why he sent His Son. There we see Jesus whose number 1 thing in life had been and always will be following his Father's will no matter the cost. And thank the Lord this is most certainly true because the Father's will was for all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. So Jesus picks up his cross long before he takes the wooden beam upon his back. He's rejected by his own family so that I might be welcomed into his own through the waters of baptism—and he's not ashamed to call you his brother or sister either. How could he? He's washed your sins away with his blood and calls you his own. He's pierced with thorns, nails, and a spear, so that we have peace with God. Your sins are forgiven. The debt is paid full and free and there's nothing you need to do to prove anything. He gives up his life so that we have life in His name. He picks up that life again to assure us that whatever we face in this life does not compare with the joy he has in store and waiting for us in eternity with him. Eternal life is yours today because Jesus won it and seals it to you through faith he creates and works by His Word.

And so we speak up for the Son because this is ours! We speak it because we want more to know that life, pardon, and peace are found in no one else. We thank God for his mercy that his Word endures forever and works. We thank him for faithful witnesses, from his disciples to those reformers at Augsburg to those very special people who spoke his Word of truth to you and me. Lord, work in us to continue to share the Word as you send us to do! Amen.