

Pastor Kory's Page

Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD

October 24-25, 2015

The Festival of the Reformation – Why?

This weekend we celebrate once again the Lutheran Reformation of the Church, which began on October 31, 1517 – 498 years ago! On that All Hallows Eve, monk/professor Martin Luther posted a world-changing document on the community message board: the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The document contained 95 theses or corrections to the teaching and practice of the Church in the 16th century.

As we commemorate the Reformation again this year, we also need to remember that it's *not* about Martin Luther! Yes, Luther showed great courage in standing up against the corrupt practices and false teachings in his day. Yes, Luther translated God's Word into everyday language and simplified the teaching of the Christian faith by producing resources such as his *Small Catechism*. And yes, Luther impacted sacred music as he composed such hymns as "A Mighty Fortress" and "From Heaven Above" and inspired other musicians such as J.S. Bach. But Luther was also a sinful, weak human being, much like us. If Luther were here today, he would be the first to remind us, "It's not about me!"

Luther discouraged his associates from calling themselves "Lutherans" so as not to draw more attention to himself. ("Lutheran" actually began as an insult from Roman Catholic opponents!) Even though the name stuck and we call ourselves Lutheran Christians, we don't follow Dr. Luther. Luther followed *Christ* and the clear teaching of God's Law and Gospel in Scripture, and so do we.

It was for this reason that the first "Lutherans" wanted to be known as "evangelical," which simply means "Good News." The first Lutherans saw the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the heart of who they were and what they believed, taught and confessed.

This week in our 8th grade confirmation class, I'm going to share the 2003 *Luther* movie with the students. My favorite scene in the film is when Luther is overcome by his guilt before God. Luther was literally beating himself up for his sinfulness. Luther's superior, brother Staupitz, intervenes. Staupitz takes off his own crucifix and

places it in Luther's trembling hands. He tells Luther to "look to Christ" and to pray, "*I am Yours. Save Me*" (Psalm 119:94).

Do you sometimes run into the same struggle as Luther? You hear Satan's accusing voice saying something like, "*God's not going to forgive you for that one*" or "*You're not good enough*" or "*You don't have enough faith.*" When Satan is doing his best to bring you down, that's when you need someone like brother Staupitz in your life, reminding you to "look to Christ."

As Lutheran Christians, we take our sins to the Lord in confession and faith and receive the assurance, that for the sake of Christ, our sins are forgiven! We come before God praying, "I am Yours. Save Me." And in His Gospel message, His baptismal grace, His body and blood at His Table, and in His Words of absolution spoken by the pastor, Christ answers, "You are mine. I have saved you."

So to be "Lutheran" is to be "evangelical": to know the Good News of Jesus by faith. We know that Jesus is more than a good teacher or a loving example. Jesus saves sinners. He is "Christ crucified." If someone asks you what it means to be a Lutheran or what Lutherans believe, start with Christ and His cross. Share about the salvation Christ accomplished for us freely. Share how Christ delivers us through the "evangelical" (Gospel) message. Share with others that our Lutheran faith is *Christ-centered* Christianity.

So *why* do we celebrate the festival of the Reformation? Because as Luther reminds the Church, our faith is still all about Jesus! And that's exactly the theme that our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will be emphasizing as we approach the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The logo to the right is based on Luther's coat of arms. The image shows that the heart of Luther's faith—and ours—is Christ crucified, our Savior taking away our sins and the sins of the world.

Please also take a look at the new website, lutheranreformation.org, or the October issue of *The Lutheran Witness* to learn more about our heritage and our future as Lutheran Christians.

Peace in Christ,
Pastor Kory Janneke



REFORMATION
2017 *It's Still All About*
Jesus