

Smokey Mountain Reflections

Reformation

Greetings in Christ,

Over 500 years ago a 23-year-old Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses to the door of the Church at Wittenberg.

Here is his introductory paragraph; “Out of Love and zeal for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following theses will be publicly discussed at Wittenberg under the chairmanship of the reverend father Martin Luther, Master of arts and Sacred Theology and regularly appointed lecturer on these subjects at that place.

He requests that those who can not be present to debate orally with us will do so by letter. In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Luther did not introduce new teaching to the Church through these thesis or debates. He instead sought to show how the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always the vibrant and beating heart of the biblical and historic Christian faith and life.

Here we are over 500 years later seeking to spread that same truth in the community that surrounds us. That can be a difficult task in a place where even the unchurched have strong opinions about faith. Many are home grown and are more a reflection of humanistic concoctions, or Calvinistic, or Armenian, doctrines that are synergistic and hinge on works righteousness. In Good Lutheran fashion you might ask, “What does that mean pastor?!”

It means that even though 50 to 75 percent of our neighbors may not go to church, they believe things like, “once saved always saved” double predestination, Limited atonement, and Irresistible grace. These doctrines teach things that scripture does not. Like, some people are predestined to damnation, and Christ sacrifice was only sufficient for the elect, and if you are predestined to salvation you can not resist grace. These are man made rational explanations for mysteries that are not revealed to us.

If you believe that you were once saved, and in your sinful mind, church just spoils your fun, then why Go?

If you believe it was predestined by God who would go to heaven and hell before He even created the world, then why bother going to church?

If you are taught to look at yourself instead of Christ for assurance of your salvation, why bother going where Christ is preached and His sacraments are rightly administered?

Some of these corrupt, non scriptural, man made, rational attempts to explain what scripture does not, make sharing our faith a little more difficult than if we were sharing it with a tribe of pagans.

But we all still live in this mission field and are called to work and live out our faith in both word and deed right where we are. You may never see others come to a point in their life where they stop rejecting what God wants to give them. But God does not say “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*” whenever it is convenient for you or whenever the people around you are receptive. God says go! So we go...daily.... into our own little mission field, knowing that He is with us “*always, to the very end of the age.*”

In Christ, Pastor Portier