

## *Smoky Mountain Reflections #181*

We as Lutherans often speak of the three Solas of the reformation, it is even on the cover of our directory this year; Scripture alone, Grace alone and Faith alone. We can traditionally expand this into The Five Solas of the Protestant Reformation: Sola scriptura, Sola fide, Sola gratia, Solus Christus and Soli Deo Gloria.

“Lutherans Engage”, the quarterly magazine for the mission efforts of the LCMS, had an article about “CLET” The Center for Lutheran Studies in English. This Center is an important place for the training of leaders and pastors for the French speaking mission work in 6 West African countries. This is one of many mission efforts of our church body all over the globe. A sign at the entrance of the center shows a painting of Martin Luther, the Luther Rose and the 5 Solas of the reformation.

So, what are these 5 Solas? They are Latin for some important principles.

- Sola scriptura: Scripture alone is the source and norm for all Christian teaching.
- Sola fide: Faith alone is what connects the believer to salvation through Christ.
- Sola gratia: Grace alone, salvation is a gift and no works of man can save.
- Solus Christus: Salvation through Christ alone.
- Soli Deo Gloria: Glory to God alone.

The last two Solas are 20<sup>th</sup> century additions to the first three. Why all this talk of Solas? Well, you may remember I warned of the troubles that come with anniversaries a couple months ago, past generations have warned against the distraction of anniversaries. Here is yet another example of such an issue.

PBS ran a reformation series as well as a number of other news outlets running articles and new pieces over the past few months on this topic. They must all be singing from the same song sheet reducing the Historic three Solas to two and replacing Grace with ....get ready for it...”the priesthood of all believers”. Talk about cherry picking. Notice they kept Scripture and Faith alone because we can (falsely) take credit for our understanding of scripture and our faith. I say falsely because the Holy Spirit gets credit for both. But to replace Grace alone, which is really hard to take credit for with a completely different topic, reveals that they are trying to pigeon hole Luther into their revolutionary narrative. To do so, would make him the genesis for all sorts of terrible things in history that he and scripture would condemn.

Luther only promoted and discussed “the priesthood of all believers” in the context of a response to the abuses of the Pope and the Roman Catholic priesthood. But Luther never argues that “the priesthood of all believers” in anyway replaces the Office of the Holy Ministry that God gave as a gift to His church. God’s church is a priesthood to the whole world and He instituted the means through which His Grace was to be delivered to His church. His Under Shepherds, serving in the office, deliver His gifts of Word and Sacrament to His people.

Luther sought not to rebel but to return the church to its roots. And the Solas of the reformation are sound principals for us to draw from. We are the beneficiaries of past generations’ pains and struggles for these truths. We, God’s people, hold that Scripture alone is the source and norm for all we believe and teach. We confess that these reveled truths of his Scripture make clear that it is through Grace alone that we can have Faith alone which saves through Christ alone and this is all to the Glory of God alone.

In Christ alone,  
Pastor Portier