

## **Reformation 500!!**

The Reformation celebration of this year, 2017 is a once-in-a-lifetime occasion! She, the Lutheran Church, is 500 years old! On October 31<sup>st</sup> we Lutherans will celebrate the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Germany.

This was the start of the Reformation, but Lutheran theology always existed in the Church, so, this wasn't technically the beginning of Lutheranism. The teachings of Martin Luther were taken from the Holy Scriptures, so, they were around a very long time before Martin Luther.

Lutheranism always existed in the church, it just was not called that until the time of Martin Luther. Luther didn't come up with anything new, but he rediscovered what was already there. In fact, the teachings had been in the Scriptures all along but had been ignored.

The first and foremost teaching of Lutheran theology is that we are saved by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ. This idea was nothing new and had always been around in Holy Scripture, but it had been lost over the years. Salvation by faith alone eventually became replaced by salvation by good works, teaching that one must do good works to get to heaven. This happened gradually over a century before Luther.

The problem began when the Bible was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek into Latin. A key word was mistranslated ... it was the word "repent." In the Greek, the word "repent" means to "change one's heart." Therefore, to repent means having turned 180 degrees away from sin and back to God for forgiveness. The key word mistranslated then, "repentance" was translated to mean "do penance" or "do acts of penance". With that meaning, repentance became a process of doing good works and acts to appease God for your sins. Since the Latin Bible had become the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church rather than the original Hebrew and Greek version, all Roman Catholics were taught to do good works to receive forgiveness of sins. This misguided teaching led to a slippery slope of false teachings and abuses in the Roman Catholic Church for the next several centuries. The printing press had not been invented yet, so the clergy were about the only ones who had a Bible to study the Word.

In comes the monk, Martin Luther. He was taught to do penance like everybody else. But Luther was never satisfied that he had ever done enough. (for good reason ... we can never do enough!)

Following the time that Gutenberg invented the printing press, Luther, who translated the Scriptures into German, was instrumental in getting the Bible into the hands of the common people in their native language.

Luther made his key discovery that to repent was to “change the heart”. Later the lightbulb came on above his head and he finally understood that great verse from Paul’s letter to the Romans that changed everything ... **“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith, apart from the works of the Law.”** Luther fought the Roman Church to reform it’s theology, not to start a new church or split the church.

I like to call it the *Copernican Revolution of the Church*. Copernicus discovered that our sun is the center of our system, rather than the earth. Similarly, Luther recognized Christ as the center of faith and not good works. This is what he wanted to reform in the church.

We cannot thank God enough for Martin Luther. We cannot thank Luther enough for his staunch and dangerous stand upon the gospel of Christ, which assures us of our salvation by grace through faith ... not by works of the law. (Eph. 2:8).

Join with me in giving thanks this month and always!  
That’s the View from Here.

Pastor Bill Winter