

The Festival of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession
St. John 8:31-36
June 25th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Truth Shall Make You Free

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

This world is full of lies and liars. Not only that, but the truth is being suppressed more and more in this world ruled by the devil, the father of lies. Lies are being paraded around as virtuous truths. The lie has become the truth in many parts of this world. People have begun to think erroneously that just because something is taught as truth by the majority, that it is the truth. As Doctor Martin Luther wrote in his letter to the Bohemians in 1523, "...he does not less err who errs along with many others, nor will he burn less who burns with many." In other words, a lie supported by the majority does not change the fact that it is a lie. The punishment for upholding the lies of this world, and its ruler, will be the same for all those who continue to live in impenitence.

We have been surrounded by lies this month in a very public way. The lie is that homosexuality is not a sin; that living in this sin is somehow virtuous. Also, this world is spreading the lie that men can become women, and women can become men. The relationship ordained by the Lord God's creation that marriage is between one man and one woman is being corrupted by the lies of the world. Since many see truth as the thing that the majority teaches, many people have been pulled away from the truth to believe this lie. A lie held by the majority does not make it the truth.

Some would ask, "Why should the Church care?" Why not just let the world be the world and ignore them, and we'll go on separate from them? Because of the law of love. It is not love to let people continue in their sinfulness. Love corrects and exhorts when the need arises. The summary of the Ten Commandments is love. The list of things that tell us what we are to do and not do; what is required of us and what is forbidden for us is a summary of love. How we love the Lord God and our neighbor is shown by our obedience to the Ten Commandments. We show love for our neighbor when we correct their sinful behavior, for the wages—the consequences—of sin is death. For the impenitent, those who willfully sin and have no need of the Lord God, that death is an eternal death.

Those who continue to uphold the lies of this world are trapped in a prison. That is what the father of lies, the devil, does to all of mankind out of his hatred for the human race. He wants us trapped in the prison of falsehood. For lies lead us away from the truth. Lies lead us away from the One, True Source of Truth, the Triune Lord God. Falsehood and lies cannot abide where truth exists. Those that cling to their lies cannot abide in the truth. They have no part in the Lord + Jesus. They are prisoners and slaves to sin. Sin rules them. Sin is their taskmaster. Sin is their prison and prison guard. They

cannot escape.

In reality we are all liars. We are all trapped in the prison of sin. For there are sins which we pass off as minor transgressions. Sins that we think are not really that harmful. When our Lord, through St. Paul, said that the wages of sin is death, he was talking about all sins no matter how great or small. Since every man will die, all men are sinful. The difference is that some people are sorry for their sins, and they wish to do better; they wish to live lives without sin; without being weighed down with the burden of sin. Others, proudly display their sinfulness for the whole world to see. And the whole world applauds their confession of willful and persistent sin. Instead of humbling themselves on account of the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure for their sins, they pridefully flaunt their sins in front of everyone.

The world, thinking that they are showing love, allows these openly manifest unrepentant sinners to continue on the path to their eternal destruction. The world supports the lie, because the world is ruled by Satan, and Satan hates mankind and wants to see all of the Lord God's prized creation destroyed in the everlasting fires of Hell. It is especially sad when churches join in proclaiming this lie as a truth. That is how the devil corrupts mankind, by making them believe a lie is a truth. It is even more convincing when the majority of people believe the lie is a truth. A lie believed by the majority does not make it the truth.

Those who abide in the truth can plainly see that this has been the state of the world since the Serpent first deceived Eve and Adam and her ate from the tree which they were forbidden to eat. They believed the lie that disobeying the Lord God would not be harmful to them. Cain believed the lie that he was not his brother's keeper. Esau believed the lie that lentil stew was to be prized more than his birthright. Jeroboam believed the lie that it was okay to set up a form of worship contrary to the worship the Lord God had established through Moses. Judas believed the lie that his accepting of thirty pieces of silver for betraying the Lord + Jesus would not lead to the Lord's death. Some of these lies were told them by others, but in many cases these men believed the lies because it came from their own hearts. They believed the lie that they told themselves. How often it is true of us? We often believe the lies that we tell ourselves.

In the Sixteenth century the lies that had crept into the Church had led many away from the truth. Men believed the lie, which they are all too ready to believe, that they can find salvation in their own works and keeping of the Law. The Gospel had been suppressed. It was chained up in prison and had become a slave to the law of works righteousness. The law of faith—that we are justified through faith alone—was suppressed everywhere. On this day in 1530, the Protestant Estates met with Emperor Charles V in Augsburg, Germany for a Diet. The emperor had granted them safe passage because he had his hands full with the murderous Turks, and had hoped that a meeting of the minds would bring peace between the two sides so that united they could face the plague of the Muslim horde.

The Diet of Augsburg showed just how far the Roman Church had strayed from the truth of the Gospel. When doctrines that had been taught correctly by the Church for centuries, and were desired to continue to be preached and taught by the Lutherans, surprisingly were rejected by the Romanists it showed how far the Papists had gone from the truth. The intrepid Lutherans remained faithful to that which had always been taught in the Church, and desired for the whole Church to remain faithful to the Church. The Papists, however, desired to cling to the lies that had crept into the Church.

We see the same thing happening in the Church today. There are church bodies that in their rush to be "relevant" and "welcoming" and "loving" cling to a lie, rather than proclaim the truth. The truth is a two-edge sword. Swords are designed to cut things; to cleave one thing into two. The truth destroys all that which is a lie. The truth kills all falsehood. This is done through faith, when men cling in faith to the truth. The truth shall make you free. The truth that we cling to in faith is two-fold. The first half is

that we believe that we are poor, miserable sinners. We believe and confess that no good thing lives in us; that sin has thoroughly corrupted our flesh so that we cannot free ourselves of our sinfulness through our own working or striving. Some impenitent sinners cling to their sinfulness and pridefully parade it around as if it some virtue to be praised. The lying world, ruled by the father of lies, the devil, certainly praises such prideful displays of impenitent sinfulness. It is better that we humbly heed the words of the Lord God when He gave the Ten Commandments that He is a jealous God and will punish all those who transgress His commandments.

This is the first part of faith: that we believe that we are sinners in need of the Lord God's grace. The second part of faith is that we believe that our salvation is not found in our works or merits, but we cling in faith the perfect obedience of the Lord + Jesus to the will and Law of God, and we cling in faith that His sacrifice on our behalf truly did atone for our sins and sins of the whole world. We who humbly confess our sins and cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus' works are justified by the heavenly Father. This is the truth to which we cling. This is the truth the Church needs to continue to purely preach and teach until our Lord's return on the Last Day.

The world is full of lies and liars. The Church needs to stand as a beacon of the truth in this world of lies, even as she did in the Sixteenth century at the Diet of Augsburg, where the Protestant Estates gave their Confession to Emperor Charles V proclaiming to all the world the truth of the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ. The Church is again surrounded by liars which have crept into the Church in the cover of night and darkness. The devil always seeks to infiltrate the Church, so that he may suppress the truth, and keep the world trapped in the prison of sin and death. It is our task on this 491st anniversary of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession to continue to boldly call sinners to repentance, so that they see their sinfulness, and believe that only the Lord + Jesus can free them from it.

Our Lord + Jesus tells the Jews who believed Him in the Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John that the truth shall make them free. If Satan is the father of lies, our Lord + Jesus is the Truth Himself. He is the One Who frees us from the bondage of slavery to sin and death in which the devil has trapped us. He is the Truth Who makes men free. For in Him is found life and salvation. In Him is forgiveness of all of our sins. We have this forgiveness when we repent of our pride and humbly confess before Him that we are sinners, and that grace and forgiveness are found in Him and His works alone.

My dear friends, let us give thanks this day that the truth of the Word of God has been preserved among us. Let us rejoice that the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ continues to be preached in its truth and purity in our pulpits today. Let us rejoice that we still can receive the Sacraments in our midst according to the institution of our Lord + Jesus. For in Him and through His means of grace, we are freed from the bondage of sin and death. May the Lord God continue to preserve us in this truth, so that we may remain free from the wages of sin, and live eternally with Him in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!