

The Festival of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession  
St. John 8:31-36  
June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Ye Shall Know the Truth

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Sermon Text:**

“Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed Him, ‘If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

### **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.

My dear friends, today we celebrate the anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession by the protesting Lutheran estates to the emperor Charles V on this date in the year of our Lord 1530. In six more years, we will celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event. It will be a significant celebration. Even this 494<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession is truly something to be celebrated. For, when the protesting Lutheran estates (this is where the term “Protestant” comes from: it is short of protesting estates) when they presented the Augsburg Confession, they were not certain that they would live to see another day. They had been given the assurance of safe passage, but their confidence in the government of the day was similar to our own trust of the government.

Seeing what the Papists had done to Martin Luther when he also was given the same assurances before the Diet of Worms, and who escaped from death only through the foresight of the ruler of Saxony, the Lutheran protesting estates were not sure that the emperor would not try to kill them as well after they presented the Augsburg Confession written by Philip Melancthon. That we are able to still celebrate this presentation of the Augsburg Confession some 494 years after its first presentation is a testament to their faithfulness. It is a testament to the faithfulness of almost five centuries of faithful Lutherans holding fast to the Confession and the Word of the Lord God.

For that is what the Augsburg Confession is, it is a faithful exhibition of the Word of God presented in twenty-eight articles. The first twenty-one articles affirm that the Lutherans held fast to the true teaching of the Word of God as it had been taught by the Apostles and the Early Church Fathers. The last seven articles deal with abuses existing in the Papist church that had crept in through the unfaithfulness of its religious leaders. The protesting Lutheran estates wanted to purify the Church of the errors, both in doctrine and practice, that had crept in on account of the unfaithfulness of those who were charged with remaining faithful to the truth of the Word of the Lord God.

The protesting estates were willing to give their lives for the truth. This is how sure and confident

they were that what they believed, taught, and confessed, was the truth of the Word of the Lord God. They were willing to die for the truth. For as our Lord + Jesus says in the Gospel reading for today, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth of the Word of the Lord God sets us free from the bonds of worry over our earthly flesh and life. For the truth of the Word of the Lord God points all men to the promise of an eternal life in Heaven. Eternal life is granted to all those who have been forgiven of their sins. Forgiveness of sins comes from faith in the promises that our Lord + Jesus proclaims to His Apostles. The promise is that He will suffer and die in our stead to pay the penalty of our sins.

The Church of the Pope had distorted this truth. It made the free forgiveness of sins for the sake of the Christ something one must earn. This teaching still exists today. Both the Roman Church and the Reformed churches teach some form of works-righteousness; that one has to earn or prove their worthiness of the gifts of the Lord God—of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

The Lutheran protesting estates in the Augsburg Confession showed that not only did they uphold the true teaching of the Church that was delivered by the Apostles to the Early Church Fathers, but that what they taught was the truth of the Word of the Lord God. In being adamant in their belief that what they confessed and taught was the truth, they were willing to lay down their lives for it. Just as their Lord and Savior was willing to lay down His life as a ransom for ours.

We remain steadfast in this Confession almost five hundred years later, for we also believe wholeheartedly that what we believe, teach, and confess is the truth of the Word of the Lord God. The Lutheran protesting estates had rediscovered the Gospel through the writings of Martin Luther. The Gospel is the truth that men are not saved by their works, but solely by the grace of the Lord God through faith in the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. The Lutheran protesting estates were willing to lay down their lives for the truth. Are we willing to do the same 494 years later?

We do not have the immediate threat of the sword at our necks as the protesting estates did. But we have the onslaught of a world which hates the truth constantly challenging us. Many Lutheran synods have succumbed to the pressures of the world. They have, at best, become nothing more than organized social clubs, and at worst, have become a den and brood of vipers destroying the Church from within by teaching that the abominable practices of the world are pleasing to the Lord God. They stand in the Church and proclaim falsehood to be the truth. What is most sad is that they blaspheme not only the Lord God, but all those who by the grace of the Lord God hold fast to the truth, and continue to teach it. These sons and daughters of Satan claim the name of Lutheran, but they have nothing in common with those protesting Lutheran estates who were willing to give their lives in order that the truth might continue to be taught.

What they were willing to sacrifice for the truth of the Word of the Lord God; that they were willing to give their lives so that the Gospel might be taught and confessed is our heritage. We are their legacy if we hold fast to the truth just as they did. For we know the truth. We know that we are saved by grace through faith in the Christ. We know that we are not saved by our works, but solely by the grace and mercy of our loving Triune Lord God Who sent the Lord + Jesus to be our Redeemer and Savior. They have sent to us the Holy Ghost, Who keeps us steadfast in this Word and faith whenever we do not resist Him by chasing after the false idols, notions, and philosophies of the world. He keeps us steadfast in the Lord's Word and work by continuing to preach into our ears the truth of the Word of the Lord God. It is this truth that makes us free.

For it is the Son of the Lord God, the Lord + Jesus, Who sets us free. He sets us free from the bondage of sin and death. To remain in sin is to continue to be in bondage to sin. When we willingly and unrepentantly continue in our sins, we remain in bondage to sin and death. For by this willful adherence to sin, we show that we reject the grace and mercy of the Lord + Jesus. We reveal that His

sacrifice means nothing to us. We do not consider the pain and suffering that He endured. We turn our heads from the misery that He endured. For in truth, we know deep inside that what He endured is what we truly deserve, and even more than that. To remain in our sins shows that we are scared of that truth, that we would rather live a lie that our sins do not matter, that we are basically good people who have not done anything worthy of eternal death and damnation. We falsely believe that all of our good works will eventually merit us eternal life. This false teaching continues to keep those who believe it held in bondage. If we believe that our sins are not that terrible, we are not free, but remain in bondage to sin and death.

This is why the teaching of works-righteousness is so dangerous, why it must be preached against in all fervor. For it does not lead men to Heaven, but it leads those who cling to it to trust in themselves and not in the true source of salvation, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Without the Christ—without the Son setting us free—we remain in bondage to sin and death.

For this reason, the protesting Lutheran estates were willing to give their lives so the truth of the Gospel might continue to remain as a beacon of salvation to all those who are lost in their sins and transgressions. They were willing to give their lives for the truth. For they knew that the truth would set men free from the bondage of sin and death.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us remain steadfast to the teachings that have been handed down to us in the Augsburg Confession. Let us boldly continue to teach the truth of the Word of the Lord God even in this world which seems to grow more evil by the day. Especially let us hold steadfast to the truth in the midst of synods and church bodies which forsake the truth for the false notion and god of relevance in this lost world. Our world is not of this world. We are citizens of the heavenly kingdom. We are only sojourners in this evil world. But just as the presenters of the Augsburg Confession did so knowing that what they believed, taught, and confessed was the truth and were willing to give their lives for it, so we too know and believe that what we teach and confess is the truth, and we will not give it up no matter what this evil world may throw at us.

For we know the truth, and the truth has made us free. We know that we will inherit an eternal kingdom in Heaven, if we remain steadfast in the faith unto death. Just as our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ has promised. Therefore, let us celebrate this day that 494 years after the presentation of the Augsburg Confession we remain steadfast in our faithfulness to the teaching of the truth of the Word of the Lord God. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

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

*Soli Deo Gloria!*