



Pentecost 18

October 8, 2017 – 10:15 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

**Theme: Sola Fide—“Faith Alone”!
Do We Have What it Takes to be What We *Were*?**

Sermon Text: Jude 3-4 (NIV)

The Sin and Doom of Ungodly People

³ Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. ⁴ For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



A century ago, when Lutherans the world over were nearing the 400th anniversary of the Reformation, Prof. W.H.T. Dau of Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis wrote in an essay marking the 75th birthday of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod:

I see before me no more striking instance of the blessing which God bestows on men's faithfulness than this very Missouri Synod. If it had not with such iron tenacity held to its confession of pure doctrine; if it ... had not fought against each and every deviation from ... the only true way; if it had adapted itself in ever so small a measure to the views of our rather impressionable age, it would *not* have achieved the results it may now claim ... That attitude of hers the Lord has rewarded. In the view of the earliest and the present members of the Missouri Synod, the glory of God and the unalloyed truth of his Word ... is to be esteemed more highly than the favor of men.

Could such glowing words be written about the LCMS today? Could they be said of our Wisconsin Synod? Is the power of our witness to the world the fact that we've never compromised when it came to our view that every word in the Bible was inspired by God's Spirit as He worked in the hearts and minds and through the pens of the prophets and apostles? Do we **"contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people"** with the same fierce tenacity our predecessors did, or are we more likely to cave-in to public pressure and alter our beliefs so that they align more closely with society's sin-skewed perspective? As we continue our month-long celebration of the Reformation, let's ask ourselves:

DO WE HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE WHAT WE WERE?

The Reformation was all about doctrine. Granted, it had social and political implications. It changed the face of society, the map and economy of Europe and the world. But what really mattered to Luther was the pure teaching of God's Word. The 95 Theses were doctrinal statements. When Luther was challenged to recant his teaching at the Diet of Worms four years later, he replied intrepidly—while shaking in his boots—*"Here I stand!"* Branded a heretic by the pope and an outlaw by the emperor, Luther refused to budge from his position that his writings aligned with God's Word. Like the late, great Tom Petty put it, Luther said: *"I won't back down."* The same truths Luther taught remain true today, for—as Jude put it, **"The faith ... was once for all entrusted to God's holy people."**

Pure doctrine never changes. It's **"once and forever,"** for it's the word of the God who **"does not change like shifting shadows"** (James 1:17). We're still saved the exact same way Adam and Abraham, Moses and Malachi, Rahab and Rebekah, Luke and Luther were: *solely* by what Christ did for us. Once the Holy Spirit led us to trust in Jesus as the Lord of our life and our Savior from sin, the blessed assurance of eternal life became our highest treasure. Like beggars pleading for mercy before a stern magistrate, we knelt in terror before the **"judge of all"** (Heb. 12:3) with empty hands, anticipating the sentence we'd earned and the punishment we deserve.

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



But, wait a second! Someone stepped between us and God just as He was poised to bang His gavel of justice and consign us to everlasting condemnation in hell. It was Jesus, the Judge's only Son! "Dad," He cries, "Let me endure their condemnation. Let me suffer your just wrath in hell with their sins charged against me so that I can fully atone for every bit of their rebellious behavior."

And that's the way it had to be if we were going to be reconciled to God and become His "holy people." The Spirit led Luther to believe that God loved him, that Christ gave His life on the cross to redeem him from the guilt and power of sin and from death and hell as well. He knew that one day he'd live forever with the Lord and all believers in heaven. All those blessings were given to him at his conversion. What was true for Luther 500 years ago is still true for us today. Faith in Christ—worked in our hearts by God's Spirit thru the promises of His Word—makes the blessings Christ won for mankind our own personal possessions. **SOLA FIDE—"Faith Alone"**!—Luther repeatedly intoned in sermon, tract and song.

Every doctrine in Scripture is connected to every other doctrine in Scripture. Jesus said, "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Flashback to the year 1529—just 12 years after Luther posted his 95 Theses. Protestants are split into two camps: Luther's followers and followers of Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli. Many in the reform movement felt it'd be great if the two men could resolve their disparities. So they arranged a conference in Marburg, Germany. From the outset, Luther knew what the key issue was. Before the start, he drew a circle on the table where they'd meet and wrote in it, "This is my body," and covered it with a tablecloth.

For several days, the two debated. They discussed 15 major theological questions, and agreed on 14½ of them. Wasn't that enough to unite the two groups and move ahead as one body of believers? But there was still one sticking point to agree on: Zwingli wouldn't move off of the idea that the bread and wine in Holy Communion only *represented* Christ's body and blood. So, finally, Luther pulled back the tablecloth. And there it was: "This is my body." For Luther and his colleagues, agreement on 14½ out of 15 wasn't good enough if it meant compromising the clear words of Christ. That kind of dedication to pure doctrine is what it means to have the same zeal for the truth of God's Word as Luther and our forbearers.

Do we have that same dedication to pure doctrine today? That takes courage—lots of courage—as Jude said: "**Dear friends . . . I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.**" Jude knew it was vital for believers to hold on to pure doctrine. He also knew it wouldn't be easy. It takes courage, guts and unwavering faith. Lutherans needed those qualities in 1817 as the king of Prussia prepared to mark the Reformation's 300th anniversary. He decided to force Lutherans in his domain to compromise the one little sticking point that separated Luther and Zwingli at Marburg and join with the Reformed who believed that the bread and wine only *symbolized* Christ's body and blood. Lutherans were forced to join the Reformed in the **United Church.**

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



Other parts of Germany quickly followed suit. In 1838, confessional Lutherans in neighboring Saxony decided that there was only one way to retain pure doctrine: they loaded up five ships and set sail across the Atlantic Ocean bound for Missouri. That took guts. One of the ships sank en route and all fifty passengers drowned. Meanwhile, most of what passed as Lutheranism in America at the time was no better than in Germany; they'd already compromised the same doctrines. A handful of pastors in Indiana and Ohio thought they might be the only confessional Lutheran clergy on the continent. They were ignored and shunned by their more "liberal" peers. Then they stumbled upon the writings of one of those Saxon Lutherans: C.F.W. Walther, and cried, **"Thank God, there are yet more Lutherans in America!"** In 1847, the 2 groups formed The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Meanwhile, in the Milwaukee Wisconsin area, a synod was forming that had more in common with the Union churches of Germany than it did with the LCMS. Yet, in time, the new synod grew increasingly confessional, adhering to Scripture as the only norm for its doctrine and practice and requiring its pastors to swear their allegiance to the historic Lutheran Confessions as a condition for their ordination and membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod—founded in 1850.

So, **"dear friends,"** do we have what it takes to be what we *were*? Yes. Yes, we do, for in these fast-changing days, we worship and serve the same unchanging God that Jude and Luther did in their respective changing times. Are there still **"certain individuals"** who **"have secretly slipped in among"** us—**"ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord"**? Of course there are—and why wouldn't there be? Paul warned his protégé, Timothy: **"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths"** (2 Tim. 4:4-5). Clergy rosters around the world are filled with the names of such deceiving spirits who peddle their own ungodly ideas for profit.

So, where do we WELSians stand as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation? Do we have what it takes to be what we once *were*: a confessional, evangelical, Bible-based denomination that refuses—as did Jude and Luther—to budge on *any* point of doctrine? Pressure is mounting from our increasingly pluralistic culture to water down our stances on several moral issues including, but not limited to, same-sex marriage and abortion rights. The same holds for our insisting—as the entire Bible does—that the only way to be forgiven and the only avenue to heaven, is to be reconciled to the Creator through Spirit-borne faith in His Son, Jesus. For Luther, agreement with Zwingli on 14½ out of 15 doctrinal points wasn't good enough because he would've had to go against his conscience, held captive by the Word of God. It would've violated his view that *every* point of doctrine has equal merit, because **"all Scripture is God-breathed"** (2 Tim. 3:16).

Trusting in Christ *alone* and Christ *completely* for his forgiveness and salvation and **"compelled"** by **"Christ's love"** (2Cor. 5:14), Luther forged ahead to finish the work God called him to do. And history—not just church history—will never be the same. **SOLA FIDE**—**"Faith alone"**—was another card in Luther's hand of "solas". And he played it whenever and wherever possible, because he knew it trumped every other card in the deck when it

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



comes to how a person gets right with God. Do we want to have what it takes to be what we *were*? Then we need to be what we *are* thru faith in Christ: blood-bought, lost-yet-sought, Spirit-wrought children of God.

“Thru faith” alone in Christ alone, we are “shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” We’ve been given “a new birth into a living hope” and “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade kept in heaven” (1 Pet. 1:3-5) for us! **SOLA FIDE**— “*Faith alone*”! Amen.

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)
7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053
(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org