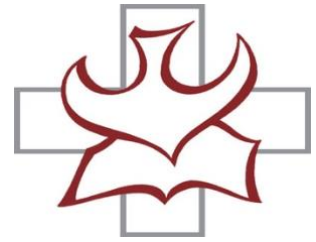


Lutheran Legacy

Psalm 46 Rom 1:16-17, 3:21-25a John 8:31-36

October 27, 2019

Pastor Dave Bolte



A legacy is something handed down by a predecessor.

In the past, the word was used in terms of family wills, estates, and inheritances; money and possessions passed down from one generation to another as a “legacy”. Nowadays, the definition has widened to include anything that comes from the past.

As conservative Lutherans, we have a legacy! We have something that has been passed down to us --- and that is what today is all about as we celebrate the Lutheran Reformation.

Our legacy is the Gospel itself!

The good news of salvation in Jesus Christ is the gift that have been given to us! The forgiveness of sins that God freely gives to us in Jesus is our legacy!

At first, you might not think of the Gospel in terms of a legacy; but remember that the Gospel of God's grace was turned upside down during the Dark Ages; and men were taught to trust in their own good works for salvation. ☹️

In Reformation times, in the 1500's, the Roman Catholic Church had lost its way, it had abandoned God's Word, and it was teaching that men had to earn their own salvation by their own works, their own money, and their own prayers.¹

¹ Here are some examples from the *current* Roman Catholic catechism:

1989 The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is *conversion*, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."³⁸ Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. *Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 2, Grace and Justification, #1989

1993 Justification establishes *cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom*. On man's part it is expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites him to conversion, and in *the cooperation of charity* with the prompting of the Holy Spirit who precedes and preserves his assent:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 2, Grace and Justification, #1993

2019 Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and *the renewal of the inner man*.

If someone did not do enough work, or pay enough money, or say enough prayers, then they would be cast into the fire of purgatory when they die and where they would suffer to make up for their sins. Jesus had been cast aside; the Gospel Good News was abandoned, and the Word of God was ignored during these Dark Ages of 500AD to 1500AD.

By God's grace and will alone, Martin Luther discovered that the Bible teaches something else. It teaches that we are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation is God's Work alone in Christ, and never our own work or effort.

Let me show you!

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. 2 Corinthians 5:19

In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us. Ephesians 1:7-8

Righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:22-24

The Roman Catholic church was furious with Luther and the Reformers. They excommunicated Luther; they burned many reformers to death at the stake, they sent others to the Inquisition² and torture. They officially responded to the Reformation Gospel of salvation that is freely given by Christ with a series of condemnations. Here are two examples of anathemas from the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 2, Grace and Justification, #2019

² The **Inquisition** was an ecclesiastical court and process of the Roman Catholic Church setup for the purpose towards the discovery and punishment of heresy which wielded immense power and brutality in medieval and early modern times. The Inquisitions function was principally assembled to repress all heretics of rights, depriving them of their estate and assets which became subject to the ownership of the Catholic treasury, with each relentlessly sought to destroy anyone who spoke, or even thought differently to the Catholic Church . . . Pope Innocent III wrote: "Anyone who attempts to construe a personal view of God which conflicts with Church dogma must be burned without pity." <http://churchandstate.org.uk/2016/04/the-horrors-of-the-church-and-its-holy-inquisition>

"If any one says, that by **faith alone** the sinner is justified; as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; **let him be anathema.**" Council of Trent, Canon 9

"If anyone says that justifying faith is **nothing else than confidence in divine mercy**, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, **let him be anathema**" Council of Trent, Canon 12

Remember that the word “anathemas” means “condemned”. This remains the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church; they condemn the Gospel of **salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ**.

**They may condemn it,
but we consider the Gospel Good News about Jesus
our priceless legacy; it is our greatest treasure!**

God sent His Son to rescued us from sin. Jesus suffered and died on our behalf; He was buried with our sin; and on the Third Day He rose from the dead. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ you are declared “**not guilty**” of your sins! God the Father declares you **righteous**! You are **justified by faith**! These are the words of eternal life! These are the words of forgiveness of sins! This is the Gospel Good News that has been passed down to us!

Our responsibility to the Gospel is two-fold: first, we are to **hold fast to it**; and second, we are to **pass it on to others**, as it has been passed on to us.

In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus said this:

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you **HOLD** to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

The word “**hold**” has the idea of **staying in place**; like staying put inside a house. Jesus teaches us that His disciples **stay put** on His teachings. The Gospel Good News is what we **hold fast** to!

3 The Council of Trent held from 1545-1563 attempted to thwart the Protestant Reformation by cursing with *anathema* anyone who believed the biblical Gospel and doctrines of the Reformers. Trent hurled 125 *anathemas* (eternal damnations and curses) against Christians. Nearly 500 years later the New Catholic Catechism upholds Trent and its *anathemas* nearly 100 times. Rome still maintains that an anathematized person is "condemned to the eternal fire with Satan and his angels."
https://www.proclaimingthegospel.org/site/blogview2.asp?sec_id=180014816&forum_id=180003854&topic_id=180010882

We hold fast and stay put on the Gospel because it

- ⇒ Forgives our sins
- ⇒ Gives us eternal life
- ⇒ Reconciles us with God
- ⇒ Cleanses our consciences of guilt
- ⇒ Sanctifies us for holy and godly living
- ⇒ Strengthens us in times of trouble and weakness
- ⇒ Hope when things look dark and desperate

As conservative Lutherans, we **stay put** and **hold fast** to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! This is an important part of our Lutheran Legacy! We live in a day and age where most protestant churches have abandoned the Gospel and drifted away from the Word of God. By God's grace alone, we “**hold fast**” as God works in our lives through His Word and Sacraments.

In addition to **holding fast** to the Gospel; it's now our turn -- during our lifetime --- to **pass this Gospel on to other people**. The gospel is the legacy that we get to pass on to others! Christ died for all people; but not everyone knows Who Jesus is or what He has done. We are to boldly confess the Gospel; you are a light that shines; we know Who Jesus is and what He has done; you are sent to the people in your life to bear witness to the Gospel Good News of Jesus!

- Your witness begins in your home -- with your family; in your marriage and with your kids. *The Gospel is the most important legacy you can give your kids!*
- It extends into your circle of friends; at work; at school; wherever you find yourself.

The Lord will open doors for you to shine your light; to boldly confess the Gospel of Jesus and His forgiveness. The gospel is the legacy that we get to pass on to others!

Today, as we celebrate the 502nd anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we thank God for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God that we are saved by **grace alone**, through **faith alone** in **Christ alone**! As conservative Lutheran Christians, the gospel is our spiritual legacy.

May you hold fast to it; and may you boldly confess it in your life! Amen!

FATHER IN HEAVEN, we thank you for our Lutheran heritage. We thank you for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the faith to believe it. Help us to hold fast to Jesus' teachings throughout our lives. Send the Holy Spirit to us so that we can boldly confess the Gospel of Jesus to those in our lives. It is in Jesus' holy Name that we ask this, amen!