

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

For 50 years there was turmoil. Fifty years of controversies. Fifty years of fighting. Where? In the Lutheran Church. Between June 25, 1530 and June 25, 1580 battle lines were drawn between pastors, heads of state, theologians and laymen. A tolerance would be allowed and a new line would be drawn in the sand. A peace would be declared and a war would erupt. Welcome to the Holy Christian Church!

Confessions of the faith bring two things: mutual confession or hatred. The Confession of the faith in the Son of Man, Jesus, does this. Confession borne from the Holy Spirit, is of both pen and tongue. Unless you are reborn by water and the spirit you will never confess, you will never enter the Kingdom of God. You will only hate.

So Jesus taught. Twelve men. You. Me. All who have ears. The task is plain.....to open the mouth. *Tell in the daylight. Preach from the housetops.* The perils of fearless confession are plain.....you might be *called Beelzebul*, the devil. Whatmore, people might not like you. But, the reward of fearless confession is also plain.....*Jesus will confess our names before the throne of God the Father.*

Are you afraid to make fearless confession? Jesus girds us. Three times in this Gospel Jesus says to His followers, "Don't be afraid." Don't be afraid of making a bold confession. Don't be afraid of what might happen to you. Don't be afraid, for the reward is waiting.

As you well know, no one is going to be won for the Kingdom of Heaven by giving someone a glass of cold water, though this good work may provide the means whereby you can open your mouth and speak the word of salvation. Neither the birds of the air nor the fish in the lake can open their mouths and tell of sin and God's grace, of the harsh law and the sweet Gospel, of eternal condemnation and eternal salvation. The Word does that. Preachers do that. You can do that.

Once upon a time, an angel broke the apostles from a public jail and gave them these instructions: **Go, stand in the Temple and keep on telling the**

**people the whole message about this life.** This life. Did the angel mean the life of first-century Jews and Romans? Did the angel mean the life of getting up to eat Coco Puffs, playing with Barbie dolls, watching TV and hanging out with friends?

The Greek is not confusing on what 'this life' means. This Life is the life of Jesus. Not surprisingly, the apostles go to the Temple and teach.....about This Life, Jesus' Life. They teach, "You hung Jesus on a cross and murdered Him. But the God of our fathers raised Him and took Him up to His right hand as Leader and Savior in order to give the people of Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things.....we and the Holy Spirit."

Speaking about This Life included the ignoble idea that men and women had something to do with Jesus hanging on a cross. Though certain Jews shouted the loudest on Good Friday to crucify Jesus, you and I are culpable. No, we weren't there and neither have we sinned like the Jews or like Adam. Still, we are guilty before God. Our sin convicts us. Our sin put Jesus on the cross. Consider our lives in light of 10 simple Words of God:

- Have no other Gods says the Law. Do we love worship or simply tolerate it? Is it a sin to skip worship on the Lord's Day? Do we claim to get just as much from God through personal meditation in our easy chair as we can from standing, kneeling and bowing before an altar? Do we love worship for the unending supply of grace from invocation through eating and drinking at the Supper to the benediction? Will you be able to pray without your mind wondering to this afternoon's soccer game or how much work has piled up for you tomorrow?
- Do not kill says the Law. Do we keep from killing by guarding our tongues? Do we believe what Jesus said about calling our brother a fool or a dummie or a stupid idiot? Do we bury gossip or do we spray it around liberally like an insecticide?
- Do not bear false witness says the Law. What then do you think of the person sitting in front of you? What do you say

about this person behind his back? What do you text about this person? Does this person smell? Are you critical of this person's raggy dress or shaggy hair? Do you love your neighbor as much as you already love yourself?

Our sins slays us. The Law convicts us. We are dead in the water. Repent. You are better off to confess with Jeremiah, cursing the day of your birth and not blessing the day your mother bore you, than to hide your shame and pretend you have kept the Law of God. Repent. Hide your face. Weep.

This is part of a fearless confession. This is part of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Law breaks us. Indeed, Jesus hung on the cross for sin. Your sin. Your ungodliness. Indeed, Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. You are justified. You are freed from sin.

You know that your old Adam was crucified in Christ's death, therefore, you are no longer enslaved to sin. In Baptism you have been buried with Christ. In Baptism, you have died with Christ. In Baptism you have been raised with Christ. Through Baptism in Christ you are given the forgiveness of sins. Sin has no dominion over you because you are not under the law, but under grace, under Christ's life. This Life of which you confess lives in you. Each time you eat and drink at this altar, Christ lives in you. He the vine. You the branches. Abide in Jesus and He abides in you. Thus you are able to bear fruit. To open your mouth. To confess. But know of the perils of such confession.

When the Jews heard the apostles preach, they called the apostles, beat them and ordered them not to use Jesus' name and talk of His life again. The Apostles remembered Jesus' words: *A slave is not above his master.*

Your fearless confession to the One Life in you will cause you to be hated. It will cause you to suffer. You may even lose your life. Fear not. Before entering the glorious Kingdom, you will go through much pain and tribulation living in this kingdom of power-hungry men. It is as Paul and Barnabas taught and preached in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,

strengthening the disciples, encouraging them to be loyal to the faith and saying to them: IT IS THROUGH MANY TROUBLES THAT WE MUST ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

And the end of it all? What of a fearless confession? What happens when a son delivers his father to be persecuted or a mother her daughter? We need to know that not even one hair on our heads will perish. We need to believe that by endurance we will gain life because of our doting, loving Lord. He is like a mother hen. Bringing us into the world. Calling us to the faith. Protecting us from harm. Teaching us to open our mouths to both receive nourishment and to squawk the truth. He is like a Bridegroom. Loving His Bride. Giving Himself up for her, so that she might be without any spot or blemish.

The only ones ashamed of This Life of Jesus are those who deny Him. They deny and live as they please. These are they who the Son of Man will deny entrance into His Kingdom when He comes with His angels. You, take heart. Fear not.

Be strengthened on Jesus in you, on Jesus for you, on This Life, Jesus' Life. IJN. Amen.