

Today is the anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession 25th June 1530. Author Philip Melancthon. Viewed as the chief Lutheran Confession; it was presented by the Lutherans to Emperor Charles 5th at the imperial Diet of Augsburg as a statement of the chief articles of the Christian Faith as understood by Lutherans; also contains a listing of abuses that the Lutherans corrected.

### **3rd Sunday after Pentecost**

Matthew 10:5a, 21-33

**Hymns:400, 349, 127, 169, 293, 392.**

#### **INTROIT: Psalm 91:1-10**

P The one who lives under the shelter of the Most High  
C **will stay for the night in the shadow of the Almighty.**  
P I shall say to the LORD, "My Refuge and my Fortress,  
C **my God, in whom I trust."**  
P For He Himself will rescue you from the fowler's snare  
C **and from the destructive plague.**  
P He will cover you with His feathers, and you will take refuge under His wings.  
C **His truth will be your Shield and Buckler.**  
P You will not be afraid of the terror of the night,  
C **or of the arrow that flies by day,**  
P or of the plague that stalks in darkness,  
C **or of the pestilence that lays waste at midday.**  
P A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand,  
C **but it will not come near you.**  
P You will only look with your eyes  
C **and see the retribution on wicked people.**  
P For You, O LORD, are my Refuge.  
C **You have made the Most High your Dwelling-place.**  
All **No harm will happen to you. No plague will come near your tent.**

**COLLECT:** O God, because Your abiding presence always goes with us, keep us aware of Your daily mercies that we may live secure and content in Your eternal love; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

**Old Testament reading: Jeremiah 20:7-13**

**Epistle: Romans 6:12-23**

**Gospel: Matthew 10:5a, 21-33**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon for this morning is written in the book of Matthew 10:5a,21-33 which was our Gospel reading before.

**5a. Jesus sent these Twelve out with the following instructions: <sup>21</sup> One brother will betray another to death and a father his child. Children will rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. <sup>22</sup> You will also be hated by all people because of My name. Nevertheless, he who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup> When people persecute you in this city, flee to another! Truly, I tell you, you will certainly not finish the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. <sup>24</sup> A disciple is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master. <sup>25</sup> It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and for a slave to be like his master. If people have been calling the master of the house 'Beelzebul,' how much more the members of his household!**

**26 “Therefore do not be afraid of them! For there is nothing covered that will not be uncovered, and nothing hidden that will not be known. 27 Speak in the light what I tell you in the dark, and proclaim on the housetops what you hear in your ears! 28 Stop being afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul! Rather, be afraid of Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell! 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father. 30 As for you, even the hairs on your head have all been numbered. 31 Therefore stop being afraid! You are worth more than many sparrows. 32 I shall confess before My Father in heaven whoever confesses Me before others. 33 I shall also deny before My Father in heaven whoever denies Me before others.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ,  
Peace be with you.

In the verses preceding today’s Gospel, Jesus has divided the twelve into teams of two each. Jesus then sent the twelve out, <sup>5</sup> Jesus sent these Twelve out with the following instructions: **“Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any city of the Samaritans! 6 Go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!** [Matthew 10:5,6.] Jesus wanted His disciples to get some experience at proclaiming the Gospel. He gave them signs so that people would know that they are from God. He gave them a specific message to proclaim, and they are almost ready. Jesus has just one more thing to teach them before they leave. He wants them to know about the response they'll get after they proclaim His message.

The response Jesus tells the disciples to expect seems totally wrong. It doesn’t seem to make sense. Jesus warned the disciples with words like, **One brother will betray another to death and a father his child. Children will rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. 22 You will also be hated by all people because of My name.** This just doesn’t seem right.

To help us understand why this seems so wrong, let’s take a few moments to have a kook at some scenarios of extreme need. Remember the cyclone Debbie, with a path of destruction that reached from Lucinda in North Queensland down through NSW and across the Tasman to New Zealand. Now imagine a team of SES and volunteers turn up with trucks carrying food, shelter, water, clothing, and so on to the victims of that storm. The victims of the storm would have nothing but thanks for these kind people. News media would broadcast from the site's of the destruction and praise the work of these rescuers. That's what we would expect.

Or how about this. Up until the middle of the twentieth century many of the diseases that we now take in or stride meant death or loss of limb. Ear infections would leave people deaf. Pneumonia was fatal. Surgeons would often operate successfully only to have patients die of infection. Then Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin. Two other men, Ernst Boris Chain and Howard Walter Florey read about Fleming’s work and developed ways to mass produce penicillin and make it available to the world at a relatively low price. In 1945, these three men shared the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Once again, we see that the world honoured them for their achievement.

I am pretty sure that most of you know other examples of serious problems that were solved by dedicated teams of people. You can also relate how people responded in gratitude to these solutions. You see you expect people to be grateful when they have a problem and someone solves it.

Now consider the problem that Jesus solves. The order of Baptism in Lutheran Service Book says:

We are all conceived and born sinful and are under the power of the devil until Christ claims us as His own. We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation.

Did you hear the problem in those words? Lost forever means an eternity of suffering in hell. This is the most serious problem of humanity.

Jesus is the solution to the problem of eternal punishment. He is the saviour of all mankind. He is the Son of God who took humanity into Himself so that He could take our place and earn salvation for us. He lived a perfect life and then suffered the eternal punishment we deserved as He hung on a cross for us. In this way, He paid the dreadful price of sin so that we could have salvation for free ... not just cheap, but free. Then He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Now He offers His salvation to all people by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

When you hear this, you realize that Jesus makes us aware of our greatest problem and He provides the greatest solution for free. You would think that the entire world would honour Him above all others. That's what you would think, but the reality is just the opposite.

This hatred doesn't make sense to us Christians. After all, we are telling people that Christ has already purchased their salvation with His death on the cross. We are telling them that He gives this salvation to them for FREE! We are telling them that Christ has purchased a gift that is worth more than the wealth of all nations, and He is giving it away for FREE. Nevertheless, the proclamation of this gift makes people angry. This just doesn't make sense.

If Jesus had not given us the words of today's Gospel, sharing the Good News of salvation would be a very confusing activity. It would be easy to think that we were doing something wrong, when people didn't eagerly desire to receive this gift when we told them about it. It would be easy to think that we were doing something wrong when people actually fought against us, and tried to dissuade us and argue with us, when all we want to do is tell them about a gift that is more valuable than all the riches contained in the world. You would think that people would fill this building and line up around the block and down the street in order to get this gift, but they don't. They persecute it instead. Why!

Well, there is something fundamentally different about the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ. There is a spiritual war going on all around us. While we are proclaiming the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, sin, death, and the devil are fighting a war of lies against that proclamation. They are doing everything within their power to make truth look like a lie and to make lies look like the truth. Although sin, death, and the devil want to enslave us, they present themselves as a way to freedom. Although true freedom is in Christ Jesus, the forces of evil proclaim Christ as restrictive and domineering, they say we're being brain washed. The forces of sin, death, and the devil are the ultimate con artists. They pose as friends, but are really deadly enemies.

Today's Gospel is a great comfort for persecuted Christians around the world. It tells us that the opposition of the world is no surprise to God. God is not up in heaven going, "O My! The world is persecuting My people. Whatever will I do?" No! God knows all about our situation. He understands that the world makes it hard to be a Christian. He understands that His faithful confessors will undergo hard times. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "**However, we preach a crucified Christ, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;**" [1Corinthians 1:23.] Today's Gospel is one of many places that tell us to expect opposition from the world. Today's Gospel also tells us that we aren't doing anything wrong when the world or even our own family turn against us for making a faithful confession of Jesus Christ.

Even with the knowledge that God understands, it's still hard to stand firm in the face of criticism. The temptation is always there for us to compromise God's teachings in order to get along with the world. If the world gets offended because the Bible says that all are sinners, we might be tempted to water down the message of sin – perhaps even skip it altogether. If the world is offended by the gruesome nature of the cross, we may want to push the cruel torture and the pain of the cross into the background. It's easy to talk about God's love and forget about His justice. It is easy to talk about Jesus as our friend who loves us and forget about the day when He will come as the judge. We often want to water down the message of God's Word just a little bit so that the world around us would not give us such a hard time.

Jesus warns that this attitude is very dangerous. He said, "**Stop being afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul! Rather, be afraid of Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell!**" The worst thing that this world can do to us is end our physical life. But this world is not all that there is. There is a judge who has the authority and power to send both soul and body to the eternal punishment of hell. It's His

teachings that we are watering down when we compromise our confession in order to fare better in this world. It's His name we are blaspheming when we give way, even a little bit, to the doctrines of this world.

So, have you been able to stand in the faith even in the face of the world's persecution? I have to admit neither have I. I must confess that in spite of my desire to remain faithful to the teachings of God's Word, I sometimes compromise my profession of faith. Once again the Law convicts with a standard of perfection that is so high that no mere human could ever keep it. Once again, the Law shows our sin to us and shows us our need for a Saviour.

That's the reason that the Gospel is so sweet to those who believe. The Gospel proclaims that Jesus is the only one who never compromised God's Word. He is the only one who remained faithful to His calling. He remained faithful to His calling even when His calling led to the cross. He is the one who paid for our sins – even our sins of watered down doctrine – with His death on the cross. He faced not only the persecution of this world, but He also faced the combined guilt of all the sin of this world. Even then He remained faithful. With the victory He won with His death on the cross, He has purchased the forgiveness of sins for all of us.

Jesus warned the disciples to remain faithful. Even so, the disciples all abandoned Jesus. At one point Peter even denied that He knew Jesus. In spite of their weak confession, Jesus took them all back.

The history of the early church tells us of the faithful Apostles. Of the eleven apostles who remained faithful to Jesus, only John the Evangelist died of natural causes. The other ten Apostles died as martyrs to their faith in Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they persevered to the end.

In spite of our many shortcomings – in spite of our fear – in spite of our desire to get along with the world at the expense of Christ's teachings, the Holy Spirit will continue to keep us in the faith. Just as the Apostles endured to the end by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will one day bring us to a blessed end here on this earth – only to take us to a blessed eternity there in heaven. There we shall wait with all the other believers in Christ until the Last Day when Jesus will return and raise all the dead, and all who believe in Him will live forever with Jesus on a new earth where there is no sin, no sorrow, and no persecution. For we shall live in that place forever with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

**3rd Hymn: 127**

### **Prayer of the Church Third Sunday after Pentecost**

**P** Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

*Brief silence*

**P** For the churches of the Augsburg Confession in all the world, that God would keep them steadfast in His Word and unified in their confession, and that He would bless those seeking fellowship, that where there is unity of doctrine, they may also be one in fellowship, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For all pastors in Christ, that though persecution is to be expected, God will use their preaching to soften the hardened hearts of unbelievers. Let them remain ever faithful to the Gospel and give them the boldness that comes from the assurance that they can depend upon His protection, especially be with those pastors in positions of leadership within the AELC and the ULMA, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For all who are in positions of authority within our government, that God would grant them clarity of mind, selflessness and wisdom in decision making, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For all who receive the Lord's Supper this day, that God may set their hearts and minds to those things which are good, right and salutary; and that having been set free from sin, they may become slaves to God, rejoicing in the free gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those with afflictions of body and soul, that God would look with favour upon all who are sick, weary, grieving or lonely, [*especially* ,] as not one of the sparrows falls to the ground apart from God, so much more does God value His children, know their every affliction and graciously care for them, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who are marginalized in our society, especially the unborn, weak and vulnerable, that God, who knows the number of hairs on their heads, would keep us mindful of our duty to speak up for those with no voice; and that He would bless every effort to uphold life, from conception to natural death, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**4th Hymn:169**