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### **Fruity Preachers**

Christ our Lord taught about preachers and their proclamation saying, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* <sup>16</sup> *You will recognise them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?* <sup>17</sup> *So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.* <sup>18</sup> *A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.* <sup>19</sup> *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* <sup>20</sup> *Thus you will recognise them by their fruits,"* (Matthew 7:15-20).

Preachers will come and proclaim false Christs and lead the faithful astray. This isn't a pessimistic way of looking at society and the Church, but a reality of living in the End Times that Jesus warns both His disciples and us today about. There are false preachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, who lead many into false belief, despair, and inevitably into eternal death. Jesus doesn't say that this is something to fear, but an issue that must be faced and recognised. Jesus says that you and I will recognise the false preacher by his fruit, or by the words he preaches and the ministry he fulfils. We will recognise them by either their faithfulness or their rejection of Scripture.

It would be great if the false preacher was a blatant heretic. It would be great if he said that Jesus isn't God, that the Holy Spirit is a lesser god, that the Lord's Supper is just mere bread and wine, or that Baptism does nothing but make a baby's head a little wet. In short, it would be a lot easier on the Church if the false preacher looked like a wolf instead of a sheep. It would be fantastic if his voice was clear and obvious instead of subtle.

This is the issue with the false preacher. He won't reveal himself as a false preacher, a teacher of darkness, but instead will show himself to be a preacher of truth and light. This has always been the problem for the Church since the serpent deceived the woman. The serpent preached a false Gospel disguised as the truth. The woman listened to the serpent and not to the words of her husband, Adam. Adam in turn did not preach the truth, but instead cast his faith in the words of the serpent instead of in the Word God proclaimed to him. They both did not believe the Word of the Lord and instead believed the serpent's lie. They doubted and then disobeyed and took the fruit from the tree and fell into sin and death. Just as the serpent twisted God's Word and cast doubt into the minds of Adam and the woman, so do false preachers twist the Word, add to the Word, and leave some of the Word out in order to lead the elect into doubt and unbelief.



So, what is the solution to these false preachers who follow in line with their father, the devil? We follow the example of Christ in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 4th chapter when He says, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*” Christ overcame where Adam and the woman failed. He heard the lie of the devil, and instead of believing his lie, He proclaimed the truth of Holy Scripture. Only the Word overcomes the devil and his wolf descendants. Only the Word of Christ recognises the wolves in sheep’s clothing and devours them.



Therefore, we must be in the Word, reading it, learning it, marking it, hearing it, and inwardly digesting it in order that the false preacher may be revealed and cast out into the eternal fire.

The Formula of Concord speaks of Holy Scripture saying, “*First, we confess our adherence to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments, as to the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which alone is the one true guiding rule, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated.*” (FCSD Rule and Norm.3). Holy Scripture is the judge of every man who proclaims the Word. The Word of the Lord judges all teachers and teaching. What does this mean for us? **We must know the Word**. We should be in every Bible study offered at our church and be in the Divine Service whenever it is conducted in order to live in the 3rd commandment and to receive the promise of the forgiveness of our sin. In doing this, in hearing the Word and sharing the Word, we are strengthened and renewed and we can therefore recognise when a wolf is among the faithful sheep.

*The Church has always been in dark times and our time is not any different.*

As Lutherans we are also guided by the Book of Concord. The Lutheran Confessions are not equal to Holy Scripture, but rather are guided by Holy Scripture as noted in the above quote from the Formula. Not only pastors, but all baptised children who confess the Lutheran difference should study daily the Book of Concord. We should study the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the power and primacy of the pope, the Formula of Concord. We should memorise the three ecumenical creeds. Why should we do this? So we can recognise the false preacher and silence their destructive speech.

The Church has always been in dark times and our time is not any different. We face the same problems, just with different names. Come to the Divine Service then and be fed in this world that starves you. Come to the altar and be strengthened by the Lord’s Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sin. Come to Bible study and grow in the knowledge of the faith. Pray for your pastor that he be kept faithful to his ordination vow to preach nothing but the doctrine and life contained in the Scriptures and the Confessions. Pray for yourself that you be kept in your baptismal grace in the forgiveness of your sin, and pray for the Bride of Christ that Christ would continue to perfect her and purify her and keep her safe amidst the wolves that would devour her.

### **Is It Time for a New Reformation?**

Take one look around our world. A need for a new reformation is evident, both for our culture and for the church. We must return to the Bible as our absolute authority.

Whether it’s liberalism, evolutionism, Gnosticism, Mormonism, Islam, New Age, moral issues (e.g., abortion and gay marriage), or the age of the earth, these are all ultimately battles over the same issue.

In 2 Corinthians 11:3, the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, warns us about this ever-present danger: “*But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*”

Paul in essence is warning Christians that Satan will continue to use the same method on us as he did on Eve: Satan will try to seduce people away from a simple devotion

to Christ and His Word.

To understand this better, we need to go back to Genesis 3:1: *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say . . . ?’”*

*Human reason has replaced God’s Word, and compromise has crept into the church.*

From the beginning, the battle was over the authority of the Word of God. The first woman, Eve, followed by her husband, Adam, gave in to the temptation not to take God at His Word. Instead, he relied on his human reason to determine truth.

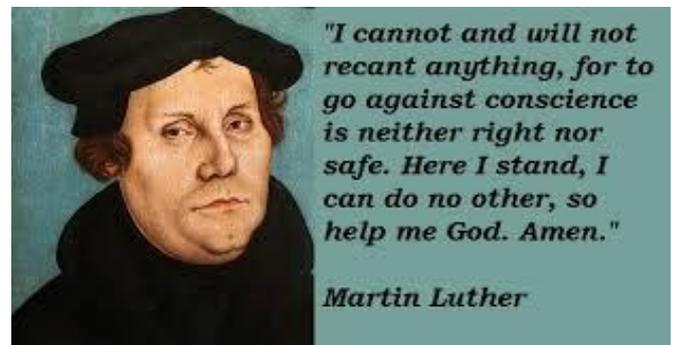
Because Adam was the head of the human race, his rebellion plunged the entire human race into sin. All his descendants inherited a sin nature that refused to take God at His Word and instead made human reason their supreme authority.

This battle against God’s Word has manifested itself in every era of history.

Paul faced sceptics on every side, who questioned the clear proclamation of God’s Word. In its early centuries, Christianity fought several challenges to the authority of the Scriptures, including Gnosticism, which taught that man was his own god. Modern issues like the age of dinosaurs or carbon dating are merely new manifestations of age-old attacks on God’s Word.

Human reason has replaced God’s Word, and compromise has crept into the church. A reformation is needed again to call the church to take God at His Word.

In the sixteenth century, the sale of indulgences by the church, for forgiveness of sin and release from the pains of Purgatory, marked a climax in the elevation of human thinking above God’s Word. Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church, challenging indulgences. This act sparked a debate about the ultimate authority of the Bible above the church, and it essentially began the Reformation.



Others joined this reform movement. The Western world was dramatically changed, as Bibles and tracts were printed on the new presses and thus biblical truths were disseminated widely. In fact, until recent decades, much of the West was still heavily influenced by the Reformation and its call to take God at His Word.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”*  
*Genesis 3:1*

The battle against God’s Word never ceased, however, as a series of men and events sought to undo the positive effects of the Reformation. Behind these attacks was an effort to make human reason supreme and steer people away from the authority of the Word of God. It was another manifestation of Genesis 3:1.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the attack against the Bible intensified. New speculation about the age of the earth and the evolution of life raised questions about the accuracy of the Bible. The core issues can be seen in the Scopes trial - said to be the most famous and culture-shaping trial in history (other than the trial of Jesus).

The Scopes trial of 1925 was not really about the teaching of evolution, as is commonly believed, but a deliberate ploy by the American Civil Liberties Union to put Christianity as a whole on trial. Even though the prosecution lawyer William Jennings Bryan was a great Christian statesman, he let the Christian faith down by not standing on God’s Word concerning the book of Genesis. For example, he was unable to give an answer about Cain’s wife, and he allowed the possibility that the earth is millions of years old.

The trial marked a symbolic turning point in Christendom. The world’s media reported that Christians were not taking God at His Word (in Genesis), and also that they could not adequately defend it.

The failure of the church to stand on God’s Word has brought devastation to countless lives. Compromise about biblical authority in Genesis 1-11 has made the church so weak that

the Bible no longer impacts the culture as it once did. This has largely occurred because human reason was allowed to invade the church and push aside God's Word.

A new reformation is needed. It's time for a new generation of reformers to stand up and call the church back to trust in God's Word where it is most under attack - the history of Genesis 1-11. It's time that believers made their voices heard, nailing Genesis 1-11 on church doors and secular buildings across the world! We need to take God at His Word and return to the "simplicity that is in Christ." Then we can watch the power of God's Word transform lives and influence the culture.

### **The False Teeth of Death and the Comfort for those who Mourn with Martha**

When we see the bodies of our beloved Saints who die in the faith we cannot wake them. No amount of shouting or shaking will stir them back to life. But it is not so for Jesus. When He stood before the four-day-dead Lazarus, He did not shake him as if he were in a deep sleep. No water was used to splash Lazarus from his groggy, sleepy eyes. Jesus said "Come out," and that was all that was needed to wake him.

Though we are left with a sense of finality in death's vicious bite, his teeth are false and his power is rendered impotent in Jesus' own dying. That's the comfort Christ offers to Martha, "*Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live*" (John 11:25). The Saints who die are not dead. They sleep lighter than we do in this life, such that Christ will wake them ever so gently with one finger. With but a Word from the Good Shepherd, the sheep in their graves will hear his voice and come out.



*Death isn't called death before our Lord God. For us it is called, and is, a death when we die. But before God it's merely a light sleep which could not be lighter. That's how our Lord Jesus Christ would have us think so we aren't terrified if pestilence and if death itself draw near. Rather, we learn to say, "What can you do, death, even at your worst? You have false teeth which you flash to frighten me so that I dread dying. But I will not regard merely what you do as you raise your blade like the executioner. Rather, I will bear in mind and see what our Lord God can do along with you and what he wants to bring when you have slain me. That is, he cares for me and doesn't care a bit about your rage and murder, but he says, 'Death, I will be your death. Hell, I will be your pestilence. You may slay my Christian yet I can still slay you and bring them to life again.'"* Martin Luther, Sermon on Trinity 16, Luther's Family Devotions, tr. Joel Baseley, 517.

### **From the Pastor:**

We are quickly approaching the season of Advent, preparing for the coming of Jesus.

Before Advent though, we celebrate Reformation Day. In years past, we have always held an AELC Reformation Day service here on the Downs. Since Pastor Ohlson has never had the opportunity to preach to his members on Reformation Day, we have decided to instead hold our next AELC service on the following Sunday, which is All Saints' Day. This will be a 10.30am HC service at Trinity Oakey. We will also hold our Harvest Thanksgiving services across the parish through November as well.

I have not had a lot more discussion with the ACLC or ULMA now for a few weeks. The ACLC are busy reading thoroughly through The Word Shall Stand, and organising passports etc, while the ULMA are waiting for a response from us regarding their constitution. I would encourage all members to look through this and if there are any questions or comments, please forward them to me or your CoC representative ASAP.

Finally, there has been a number of illnesses across the parish. Please let pastor know if there is someone ill so their name can be included on the Sunday prayer list.