

Fear Not, Little Flock

Despair and consternation may surround us. We fret over the onslaught of Islam. We lament the postmodern worldview which threatens the truth of the Gospel. All of these worries, and more, confront us as Christians, yet we need not worry. Christ is on our side! Here are a few comforting words from Lutheran theologian Hermann Sasse, written in 1938, as Nazi ideology threatened the core of Lutheran theology in Germany. The title of Dr. Sasse's essay is "The Presence of Christ and the Future of the Church":

*Whether the church is present or not does not depend on the good or evil will of people, but only on his [Christ's] will. If he in his limitless mercy wills that his Gospel be preached also in the future among our people, and that generations of our people yet unborn should hear the saving message of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ, then it will most certainly happen. No one knows how it happens. It may be that it will happen without the methods of modern "publicity" and without the technical means of the modern transmission of information. But there can be no doubt that the mandate shall be carried out: "What is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the rooftops!" [Matt 10:27]. "Go forth and preach the Gospel to all creatures!" [Mark 16:15]. What an unbelievable lack of faith it would be if we were to somehow believe today that the Gospel would be in danger if the freedom of the press of 1848 and 1871 no longer existed! He who believes in the mighty power of the divine Word with the strong, unshakable faith of Martin Luther knows that this Word does its punishing and saving, building and destroying work without respect to human help or earthly impediments. What was said to the prophets regarding the world-historical effects of the divine Word given to them to bear (e.g., Jer. 1:10) remains true today. What Luther said unflinchingly about this Word at the Reichstag ["diet"] at Worms [1521] to the governing authority of his people, when it was held up to him that his doctrine would necessarily lead to an "inhuman sundering" of the German nation, remains true also in the twentieth century. The Word which created the world and everything in it, visible and invisible, does not need the achievements of the French Revolution in order to be effective today. No matter what we think of the "rights" of the freedom of speech or of the press, which since the eighteenth century have been defined as "human rights" of democratic peoples, Almighty God does not need "human rights" when he wills to speak his Word. It is of the essence of this Word that it creates its own means. Therefore the church will remain among us in the future so long as Christ remains with us. "For thus he speaks, and so it happens; he commands and so it stands" [cf. Ps 148:5]. The church exists in our century as a miracle of God. To people it is an inconceivable riddle, to many a terrible offense. Its future is not determined by people, just as it cannot be foreseen by people. For the future of the church is the future of Christ."*¹

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, Luke 12:32.

¹ Hermann Sasse, *The Lonely Way: Selected Essays and Letters, Volume I*, Trans. Matthew C. Harrison et al. (St. Louis, CPH, 2001) 463.