

Sermon Followed by Service

October 31, 2021

Mk 13:5-11

October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nails 95 Theses, 95 debating statements, to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. In those 95 Theses Luther says you can't buy forgiveness. And he was attacked. Luther taught the only way to escape God's anger and judgment is through the forgiving blood of Jesus. And he was attacked. Luther added that we can't be saved by what we do; we are saved only by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus. Again and again Luther pointed to Jesus. He pointed the guilty heart - that's you and I, isn't it? - to Jesus and the cross: "You're forgiven full and free with Jesus!" He pointed the dying heart - again, that's you and I, isn't it? - to Jesus and Easter: "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Again and again, Luther pointed to Jesus. And for that, he was attacked. Today, we'll talk about it in Bible Class - at the Diet of Worms, church and state demanded that Luther go back on his word, that he go back on God's Word; Luther refused; and he was attacked, put under a death sentence. Because Luther taught God's Word and Jesus as Savior, the devil had gone to war against Luther.

Thank God for peace today, right? I'm being sarcastic. In some corners of Christianity, in some corners of Lutheranism, there is peace. Not peace with God, but peace with sin. Not the peace that comes from listening to Jesus and putting sin and Satan in their place, but the peace that comes from ignoring Jesus and giving in to sin and Satan. That peace, the peace that comes from ignoring Jesus and giving in to sin and Satan, that peace won't last; that peace ends in weeping and gnashing of teeth - forever in hell.

On a Reformation Sunday, whether we're talking about the blessings of the Reformation and Lutheranism, or talking about attacks against Reformation and Lutheranism, there is a danger that we pat ourselves on the back or appear to be patting ourselves on the back. It is a look that may be attractive to us, but can be very unattractive, even repulsive to others. What do we want to keep in our mind and in our words when talking about how Lutheranism, or our faith and teaching, may be different?

And the peace that comes from listening to Jesus and putting sin and Satan in their place - it doesn't always feel like peace, does it? It often feels like a battlefield - the world against us, friends against us, family against us, our self

against us. Some days it might feel like you're alone in the fight. You're not; we're not. Around the world Christians are under attack. And around the world Christians are turning to us. Why? They see we're still in the fight, when so many other churches have given up the fight. They see so many other churches soft on sin, redefining sin, allowing sin, approving sin, even cheering sin.

Why are we against sin? Why are we for God's law???

At the same time, they see more and more churches fuzzy on Jesus - feeling good about Jesus is more important than listening to Jesus. Knowing Jesus, believing Jesus isn't necessary as long you don't know any better; knowing Jesus, believing Jesus isn't necessary as long as you're good, or at least want to be good, or have a hard life. I don't say that so we pat ourselves on the back. It's just part of the battle report.

Does that sound too generic? In what parts of Christianity do we see churches and church groups fuzzy on Jesus? What is the danger for us? What is the lesson for us?

Here's another part of the battle report - in so many corners of the battle, in so many homes, in so many friendships, Christ's church is going silent, turning in on itself, circling the wagons to protect itself. In how many of our homes and families, in how many of our friendships have we gone silent with what Jesus has to say?

How does that question sit with you?

What if Luther kept quiet? What if our parents, grandparents, ... kept quiet? What if Jesus kept quiet and kept himself safe in heaven? We would all be left on our own with Satan, left on our own under God's judgment.

Who spoke up for you, to you, so that you know Jesus today? Was it always easy for them? Did you make it easy for them?

But Jesus didn't keep quiet. He spoke up to put sin and Satan in their place. He spoke up with the love of God.

Jesus didn't just speak up. Jesus put his words into action. How?

And in our lesson he spoke up to sound the alarm: **“Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many.”** The devil is a liar, and that’s the way he attacks the church, with liars. The death sentence on Luther’s head couldn’t stop the Reformation. The armies sent to squash out Lutheranism couldn’t stop the Reformation. But what almost did kill the Reformation were the liars. Not the liars outside the church, but the liars inside the church.

Did you read the Forward in Christ article about the “second Martin”?

Back then the lies in the Lutheran church weren’t as bold as, “You don’t need Jesus; any god, any good will do.” The lies in the Lutheran church sounded small, they sounded good and reasonable. But they pointed people away from Jesus. And hearts and churches that aren’t looking first and foremost to Jesus are hearts and churches that are turning away from Jesus.

That’s why we’re so careful not to join with other churches - or other religious groups like lodges and scouting. We don’t want to fall for the lies the devil has planted there. But just staying away from other churches won’t keep us safe. The devil is working his lies in my heart and your hearts, right here in our church. Lies like, “If people aren’t coming to church, if people are caught in a sin, you better not get them upset or they might not come back.” That’s not what God says; God says, “Show their sin or you’ll never have the chance to show them their Savior.” Lies like, “If they want a church, they know how to get here.” That’s what the devil says; Jesus says, “GO OUT AND BRING THEM IN.” Lies like: “I’m fine just the way I am.” That’s why Bible Study is so important, so that we can see the devil’s lies, not just the lies he’s telling out there, but the lies he’s telling in our own hearts and in our own church. So that we can answer the devil’s lies with Jesus’ truth.

In our lesson Jesus sounds the alarm: **“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.”** Luther was stood up before the Holy Roman Emperor and commanded to go back on God’s Word. In Washington, in Springfield, politicians today are working bills to try to silence what we teach, to change what we teach. But it’s not just activists in politics who are trying to silence us, trying to silence God. Every day we are stood up before the world and told to back down from what we teach. Told to back down on condemning sin, such as sex before or sex outside of God’s plan for

marriage. We're told to back down on teaching that Jesus is the only way to be saved. We're told to back down from expecting God-time to come before play-time. And what have we done? With family, with friends, maybe with ourselves? We've gone soft, haven't we?

Hearing that doesn't feel good, does it? Preaching that doesn't feel good either. But I need to say it and I need to hear it because our hearts and our souls are under attack. And hearts and souls all around us are giving up the fight - giving in to the world, giving up on Jesus.

We don't need to give up. We don't need to live like the battle is lost. Listen to Jesus: **"When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains."** How far do you have to look to find a world at war? I don't have to look any further than my mirror. How far do you have to look to see a world shaking apart? Perhaps no further than your own family. And yet what does Jesus say? **"DO NOT BE ALARMED."**

"DO NOT BE ALARMED." The attacks on our hearts, the shaking of our world, the attacks on our faith, the shaking of our church, can lead us to think, "It's hopeless. The church is done for; Christianity is done for." Or we can see things Jesus' way, **"these are the beginning of birth pains."** The attacks on our faith, the attacks on Christ's church, are all something we should expect - pain before the gain. Pain that we can survive. Pain in which Christ's church can even thrive.

That last statement can raise questions of conflicting promises and history. What conflicting promises and conflicting histories do we have as we consider persecution and Christ's church?

Jesus isn't leaving us on our own to face sin and Satan. He's not leaving us alone on the battlefield. He's with us; his Spirit is with us. Jesus says, **"Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit."** When the world calls your faith wrong, you are armed for the attack. In here [Bible], you have God's hammer and fire; in here, you have God's sword and shield. In here, you have the Word and the Spirit; you have God himself.

How is Jesus' statement and promise ("do not worry ... just say ... it is the Holy Spirit") abused? How is it properly used?

And with God's Word, we will win. The Word will be preached. The Word will come true. And we will be safe. That's how the Christian church got its start. That's how the Lutheran church got its start. And that's how Christ's church will survive today. Yes, we live in a church under attack, but don't be alarmed. Be on your guard and Jesus will give you the victory. Amen.

What does Christ's victory look like?

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

A Family Connecting in Christ



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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Masked

With the renewed mask mandate across Illinois, we now offer masked worship - Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 9. If you have questions, please ask!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help, and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.
- Please join us after Sunday service for fellowship and Family Bible Hour.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- Children's worship bulletins and "church bags" (with paper, colors, and Bible story books) are available in the Narthex Gathering Area.
- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Large Print** Service Folders are available from an usher.
- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

October 30 & 31, 2021

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we celebrate God's gifts to us in the Lutheran Reformation ... and Jesus equips us for the challenge that is ours, not just as heirs of the Reformation, but a challenge that is ours as baptized children of God. What is that challenge? To stand up for the truth even as Satan marshals his forces against the truth. Baptized into Jesus, we join Luther standing on Scripture: "Here I stand! Amen!"

OPENING HYMN

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" Hymn 201

A mighty fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need That has us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.

With might of ours can naught be done; Soon were our loss effected.
But for us fights the valiant one Whom God himself elected.
You ask, "'Who is this?'" Jesus Christ it is,
The almighty Lord. And there's no other God;
He holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done!
One little word can fell him.

The Word they still shall let remain, Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain With his good gifts and Spirit.
And do what they will -- Hate, steal, hurt, or kill --
Though all may be gone, Our victory is won;
The kingdom's ours forever!

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious Lord, our refuge and strength, pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your Word, protect and comfort them in all temptations, defend them against all their enemies, and bestow on the Church your saving peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Daniel 3:16-28

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

They replied, "Certainly, O king."

He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

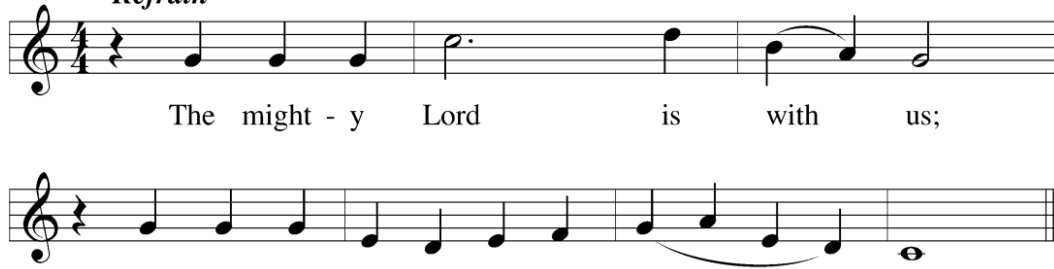
Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.


PSALM 46 (CW)

Refrain



The might - y Lord is with us;
the God of Ja - cob is our for - tress.

Psalm Tone



God is our re`fuge and strength,
an ever-present help in `trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the `earth give way
and the mountains fall in to the heart `of the sea,

Though its waters `roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their `surging.

Refrain

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.

God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.

“Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Refrain

EPISTLE LESSON

Philippians 1:27-30

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved - and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. If you continue in my Word, you are truly my disciples,
and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Alleluia.
(John 8:31,32 cf)

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 13:5-11

Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

"You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit."

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

HYMN

"O Lord, Look Down from Heaven"

Hymn 205

Choir - V. 1 & 2

Congregation - V. 3 & 4

*O Lord, look down from heav'n, behold, And let your pity waken.
How few are we within your fold, Your saints by all forsaken;
True faith seems quenched on ev'ry hand; Your Word is not allowed to stand.
Dark times have us o'er taken.*

*O God, root out all heresy, And of false teachers rid us
Who proudly say, "Now where is he Who shall our speech forbid us?
By right or might we shall prevail; What we determine cannot fail;
We want no lord and master!"*

Therefore said God, "I must arise The poor my help are needing.
To me ascend my people's cries, And I have heard their pleading.
For them my saving Word shall fight And fearlessly and sharply smite,
The poor with might defending."

Defend your truth, O God, and stay This evil generation,
And from the error of its way Keep your own congregation.
The wicked ev'rywhere abound And would your little flock confound,
But you are our salvation!

SERMON

Mark 13:5-11

PRAYER

M: May this be a time, O Lord, for confession and repentance. Forgive us for the apathy that harms our faith and hinders our works. Forgive us for boasting of our past achievements and for blaming others for our present problems. Rid us of indifference to public worship and Bible study. Destroy the distrust that plagues us, and shatter every thought and word that harms the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

C: Create in us pure hearts, O God, and renew steadfast spirits within us.

M: Let this be a time, O Lord, when you renew us again by Word and sacrament, when you reform our hearts and minds, and when you restore to us the joy of fellowship and service. Grant us in this age and in this place the courage of the apostles, the steadfastness of the reformers, and the dedication of those who have gone before us.

C: May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us.

M: Let this be a time, O Lord, when we recommit and reconsecrate ourselves to the ministry of the gospel. Let us find joy in our unity, zeal for our work, and success in our labor.

C: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us, that his ways may be known on earth, his salvation among all nations. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

(Before and after Communion prayers are found in *Christian Worship*, page 11.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **(Spoken) And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my **†** body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my **†** blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

LAMB OF GOD

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”

Hymn 203

Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would seek to overthrow your Son
And to destroy what he has done.

Lord Jesus Christ, your pow’r make known,
For you are Lord of lords alone;
Defend your Christendom that we
May sing your praise eternally.

O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth.
Support us in our final strife,
And lead us out of death to life.

OFFERING

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan this
code with your mobile device.*



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