

IN NOMINE IESU

Beloved Saints of Christ the King,

I love history! My mother's side came over on the Mayflower. My father's side lived in downtown Philadelphia and would regularly take me to places like Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, and other historical sites. I have a very fond memory from when I was about 4, of our family, after our Thanksgiving Day church service, going for a picnic at the place where George Washington crossed the Delaware River to attack the Hessians on Christmas night in 1776 – the battle of Trenton.

What happened at that crossing helped to shape who we are as a nation. It is one small event, but it carries a heavy influence, even if we, today, do not now know that particular history. This type of event is truly eventful, regardless of whether we are aware of it now.

Here's another "not so small" event 493 years ago today: The Muslims under Suliman the Great had reached the outskirts of Vienna, Austria, in 1529. There was fear of their great military power. The Lutherans, being a thorn in the side of Rome and with the threat of the Muslims, there was a call for understanding, thus the Royal Diet convened in Augsburg beginning on June 20, 1530. On this day, the 25th day of June, Philipp Melancthon stood up and read aloud the Augsburg Confession.

Now many of you may have never read the Augsburg Confession, but you have indeed received its clarity, its truth, its "Christ for sinners," in the faithful preaching of your beloved Pastor Smith. It is our doctrine, our teaching, it lays out who we understand God and His Saving Action and Gift to be. It lays out who we are as the Church. We'll go into more detail about this in the Bible Class. But for now, the point is that **where clear confession of the truth is given, opposition will always follow**. Indeed, Luther could not be there to read the Confession. He was an outlaw from Rome, with a price on his head! Truth and love, when joined together will always meet with severe opposition!

Jesus has just called the 12 Apostles and given them the blessed calling to heal all diseases and cast out demons in His name. Yes, exciting times! But there is a catch, a truth that cannot be denied. If Jesus is truly God and Man in one flesh, and if He really came to pay for the sins of the whole world, then *every other means of salvation, of finding forgiveness for sins is excluded*. That means I cannot save myself, either by my own reason or my strength. My salvation is solely the work of the Triune God, delivered by Jesus.

Now Jesus knew that this exclusive message of hope and life, of salvation in the forgiveness of sins would meet opposition, and most especially and most painfully in the home as family members who come to know the peace of the Prince of Peace would find anger and hatred by father or brother or mother, even to the point of handing one over to death for professing Christ!

Jesus knew that enduring to the end, ***that is, simply trusting in the promises, in the Cross***, this yields the fruit of salvation! That is what Jesus is saying here and it is meant to comfort and encourage, not to discourage the 12, or you and me, by placing an impossible standard before us. Christ's endurance to the end... the Cross and the Grave and finally three days later, His rising, this endurance is now yours. So, in your opposition, in those times of fear, rejoice! The disciple is not excluded from the trials of his teacher, nor the student isolated from the slings and arrows directed at his master. Nor is the disciple or student excluded from His Victory, His Peace!

Because Jesus declared that He is God, the reaction of the fallen heart is to see Him not as God but as the devil, and with Him, those who follow Jesus are also to be labeled as little devils.

The fallen heart always wants some credit for its salvation. It cannot stand to know this victory comes from outside of us!

But it does come from outside of us... it comes solely from the Blood of Jesus! This truth is exclusive. Because this truth does not originate in my fallen sinful heart, it is actual and true... and it will always meet with those who want to take credit for it.

You've got to love Jesus' next words: Fear Not! Three times Jesus tells the 12, and you here today: Do not fear, do not be afraid! He has you! No one has ever slipped through the nail-holes in His hands. His grip is sure. It was sure as it held fast to the Cross, to your cross, and as that grip held your sins... and just as surely and for certain, that same grip holds you. That grip holds you as His beloved, His bride, His child, His beloved. Jesus tells the Church that we will know severe pain, loss, opposition, and humanly speaking, plenty of reason to be afraid!

Ah, but the Truth of the Cross and Empty Tomb is simple: It is Finished! Sin's reign, it is finished! Sin's victory first seen with that bite of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden is overturned in Jesus, and in Baptismal grace, He now applies that victory, that overturning, to you... and now through you to this lost world. Their opposition and their fear, it is finished.

Yes, beloved, as true as it is that sin is that bad, that blinding, that anger-producing, there is a greater power and greater truth: ***The heart and action of the Triune God who sent His only-begotten Son, for you, for all, to pay for all sin.*** Truth can stand the glare of sunlight, so whatever you read or hear from God in His Word, feel free to shout it from the roof-tops. It stands the test of time, yes, the test of sunlight!

The Gospel talks about those who speak the same truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior... the Greek word is not "acknowledge" in v. 32, it does not say, ³² *So everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven.* More beautifully Christ declares that everyone who confesses the very truth He has given him or her (homologeow = to say the same words) He will say the same words about them!

You have a beautiful gift of making this homologeow, this same confession in your Baptism, where Christ not only drowned you in Baptismal waters, laying you in the borrowed tomb of Jesus some 2,000 years ago, and raising you with Jesus. He gives you that new life and renews that life every day as you live out your Baptismal grace, confessing both your sins, and the confession that you know your only hope is this same Jesus. Armed with this you endure, and you do not fear!

As you confess Him, the world will see and come to know the truth of this very God of Love, this very God of Peace and Reconciliation, this very God of Forgiveness and Life. What is not possible for us to endure – the anger, even of family over the Gospel – Christ empowers and equips you and me and the whole church to confess and proclaim.

Yes, the history of the Cross and the Empty Tomb is not merely a story of the Holy Land two millennia ago, happening to a Carpenter, the Son of a carpenter and the Son of God. It is His Story now lived out to you and through you. It has been lived out these 493 years in this church body. Oh, the opposition is strong... but the love, the perfect love which is Christ, He casts out all fear!

To this Jesus belongs all the glory. And to you, as you face the opposition of family and the world, hear this one final word – THE WORD OF GOD: Fear Not! Even so, Amen and to God belongs all the Glory. Amen!