

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Easter 4  
Saturday, April 24, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, April 25, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

# “Salvation in No One Else”

John 10:11-18

In our first reading, we hear of when Peter and John are called to come and stand before the Council – the Sanhedrin, the Council of 70 Elders who had authority over the spiritual matters in Israel. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (the two men who buried Jesus) were the only members of the Council who were “looking for the kingdom of God” and found it in Jesus.

Last week, we focused on Martin Luther and his words as he stood before the Imperial Diet. Much like Peter and John before the Council in Jerusalem, Martin Luther had very few supporters among the European leaders – it was pretty much just Fredrick the Wise, Luther’s hometown prince who was supportive and willing to stand at risk on behalf of Luther at that time. Of course, Fredrick was one of the ten most powerful men in Europe, as he was one of the eight electors who elected the Emperor. He had the political clout to withstand a bit of pressure from the Emperor and the Pope.

However, among those leaders in attendance at the Diet of Worms was George – Margrave of Brandenburg. Luther’s words at Worms had a profound effect on him and he became one of Luther’s most ardent supporters. He put more at risk than Fredrick the Wise ever did.

George of Brandenburg is the one who would stand with Philip Melancthon, other German royalty, and members of the council from the free cities such as Nuremburg as signers of the Augsburg Confession at the Diet of Augsburg. Like Luther at Worms, at Augsburg, the followers of Luther were commanded to recant and give up the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone.

George of Brandenburg approached Emperor Charles V and said, “Before I let anyone take from me the Word of God and ask me to deny my God, I will kneel and let them strike off my head!” As George kneels down before him, Emperor Charles is so shaken by this that he blurts out in broken German, “No head; no head!” And Charles allows for the reading of the Augsburg Confession – the 28 articles of faith drawn up by Philip Melancthon under the guidance of Luther.

As I have been thinking a lot about the events of Luther’s life 500 years ago, I am seeing many more analogous circumstances between Luther and the

disciples (Peter in particular). It is not a connection I have ever really focused on before.

Peter's first real public sermon which we will hear on Pentecost led to the baptism of 3000 souls that day. Martin Luther's first words that reached beyond Wittenberg and entered the public sphere were the 95 Theses. Within a couple of months, there were copies of it in England. It changed the conversation of the European world. Of course, the impact of Luther pales in comparison to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Nevertheless, Luther and Peter will share much in common in their ministry – including saying some unfortunate things early on before the Gospel was fully revealed to them.

At the Diet of Worms, Luther confesses that he wrote too harshly against his opponents. He said, "A am but and man, and I can err." At least Luther didn't deny Jesus three times. That seems like a win in Luther's column – until you remember Luther's words I shared with you last week how, prior to his rediscovery of the Gospel, he said of himself, "I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God."

Whether it is Luther, or St. Peter, or anyone for whom their minds have yet to be opened to the Word of God, failure is the only option. It should be the

expected outcome. Until you are convicted by the Law and have your eyes turned to the Gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ, thoughts, words, and deeds full of error are the expectation.

This is why Peter speaks as firmly to the Council as he does. The man who was crippled was healed by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. . . This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else.”

That is a message of Law and Gospel meant to turn the hearts of those whose minds are not yet open to the Scriptures. At the Diet of Worms, Luther had strong words of Law and Gospel meant to turn the hearts of those whose minds were not yet open to the Scriptures. When George of Brandenburg was told that he could no longer read his German Bible or have the Divine Service in the German language and must return to the Roman Church and find salvation in his works of penance, again he says, “Before I let anyone take from me the Word of God and ask me to deny my God, I will kneel and let them strike off my head!”

We are called to be witnesses of Christ to the world, because, as Peter says, “There is salvation in no one else.” So we gather together once again and boldly proclaim, “Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!! Amen.