

October 29, 2017
Celebrate 500 years!

500 years ago (this coming Tuesday) Martin Luther posted his 95 theses in Wittenberg. Little did he know this would go on to spark a revolution in the church of the time. It was neither his desire or intent to start the chain of events that he did, but nonetheless because of his actions the church changed. And it was good.

The church in the time of Luther and for a good time beforehand faced a lot of problems and on top of that there was much corruption in the ranks of the church leadership. This led to a misunderstanding, then mishandling and finally to the willful obscuring of the gospel of Jesus Christ. By Luther's time, the church held Jesus "captive." The pope and other leaders within the church held his grace over the people as necessary but not enough for complete salvation. Church clergy were considered the only ones that could hope to get grace enough for salvation, and thus Saints and the Virgin Mary were petitioned for the sake of the common people. The church was a mess.

So today we celebrate Luther's break from that mess. But, we do not celebrate because Martin Luther was so wonderful. In fact, today we do not focus on Luther himself, rather we celebrate the truth that he set free for the people. Throughout the Reformation Luther did many things, but if we celebrate those and forsake his rediscovery of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we miss the point and should be pitied. Instead, we celebrate that those theses started him on the path to spread the message that Christ is the way, the truth and the life and that by faith in him alone we are saved. Not through the teachings of the church apart from scripture and not from

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decrees of men, but Luther showed the world once again that Jesus' victory over sin, death and Satan by his own death and resurrection were our salvation. We

learned from Luther that Christ was more than enough for our sins and shortcomings. We learned from Luther that we need not live in fear or doubt that those in Christ did not receive salvation.

Luther freed the gospel from the people who held it captive that we may be assured of what God has done for us. Having been justified by grace through faith in Christ, Luther shared that same message with the world. That is why we celebrate. We lift Luther the man up giving thanks for what he did to give us Jesus. But, we do not elevate him beyond that, just as we don't elevate Paul beyond a wonderful evangelist or Peter beyond a faithful "father" of the Church. As with all good men and women of faith, Luther points us to Jesus.

Look to Jesus today. There you will find your sins forgiven. In him, you will find the love of the Father who gave his only Son up to death for you. Look to Jesus and see that he has given his Spirit to you to guide and guard you, to help you understand scripture, to conform you to Jesus Christ. Today, look to Jesus and know what he has done for you. He died. He rose. He won. He is enough. Do not fear death. Do not fear sin. Do not fear Satan. Jesus is victorious. Jesus is free and has set you free! He whom the son sets free is free indeed! Celebrate the Reformation, where Jesus through Luther and his compatriots set the people free from the wrong teachings of the church. Celebrate Jesus, rejoice, pray, praise, give thanks.

Pastor Carl J. H.

