

Footstep #37 - What is a Lutheran?

After the civil disturbances with the Peasant's Revolt ended, Luther continued to risk being arrested and possibly killed. By 1526, Protestant and "Luther" churches began to appear. It is during these years that Martin Luther faced the end of his dream of a reformed church because there was no income to support the new churches. The peasants were no longer willing or able to give their crops (tithes) to the church, the endowment money that supported the cloisters was gone, and the wars, confusion, and split with the Roman Catholic Church (5 years ago) simply led to the abandonment of any future for a new form of Christianity. Luther also realized that the independent autonomy of the local congregation (priesthood of believers) could not select their own pastors because the church needed a head – but he had previously called the pope the Antichrist!

However poor the church was financially, it was prospering evangelically as the whole population of Saxony was on fire with the Holy Spirit, excited about participatory worship in their own language, and grasping the power of *the theology of the cross* of Jesus Christ – God's love is freely given to the sinners who cursed Him! It is the weakness that the world sees in the humiliated Son of God on the cross that Luther and his followers accepted as the most powerful revelation in human history! Luther's understanding of God's action in coming to our world to save us is revolutionary!



The Theology of the Cross – From Wittenberg.

“Luther's dilemma was that he wanted both a confessional church based on personal faith and experience, and a territorial church including all in a given locality. If he were forced to choose, he would take his stand with the masses, and this was the direction in which he moved.” (Roland Bainton. *Here I Stand*. p. 243)

Dr. Robert Kolb, brilliantly explains what it means to be a Lutheran in both the 16th century and today: “Luther's metanarrative not only had a plot that focused the audience's attention on the biblical text and on life; it also had a setting. Luther believed that the fall of Satan and his crew and the fall of Adam and Eve with all their descendents has placed the history of humanity within a setting of conflict...God's law continually labels the devil's way of life fraudulent and fatal; his gospel continually re-creates those caught in its death grip. This means that every day once again brings the necessity of dying to sin and being raised to new life in Christ.” (Robert Kolb. *Luther and the Stories of God*. p. 26)

The life and worship experience for Lutherans is active and aggressive because their faith in God motivates them to continual acts of love, praise, and obedience to their Savior, Jesus Christ!