

Luther was declared to be an “obstinate schismatic and manifest heretic” (Brecht I.474). This judgment against Luther remained for the rest of his life.

There is no better summary of Luther’s confession and faith at Worms than his letter to Emperor Charles V, dated April 28 and written on his return (AE 48.203-209). Luther repeatedly emphasized his wish that “the Word of God should remain free and unbound” (205).

God, who searches the heart, will be my witness that I am definitely ready to comply with and obey Your Sacred Majesty, whether it bring me life or death, glory or shame, gain or loss. I make no exceptions save the Word of God, by which not only man lives, as Christ teaches in Matthew 4 [:4], but which also the angels long to see according to 1 Peter 1 [:12]. Since [the Word of God] is above everything, it has to be held absolutely free and unbound in all things, as Paul teaches. (206)

He continued,

For to surrender these earthly things, to jeopardize and lose them, does no harm to salvation, since we shall finally have to give them up, even though we have guarded them. Concerning the Word of God and the eternal values, however, God does not allow this risk, that is, that man should surrender [the Word of God] to man. For he has ordered that all men and all things should be submitted only to him, as he alone has the glory of the truth and is truth himself... The authority of this Scripture is greater than the comprehension of the whole of man’s reason. (206-207)

Finally, Lutheran demonstrated his conviction that the confession of a Christian is a confession “on behalf of the whole church.” It was my concern for the church that motivated me to send this letter after having left town” (208-209). To this day we regard Luther’s confession as our own, because it was the confession of God’s Word, because it was the confession of the eternal and abiding truth, because it was the confession of the Church of all times and places. God grant us to continue in this confession in life and in death.

FUTURE DATES (see wylcms.org for information)

May 6-8: Wyoming District Convention, Casper
May 31-June 4: Pastors Continuing Education, Fort Robinson
June 10-12: Pastors Wives Retreat
June 17-19: Family Retreat, Uinta County
June 25-27: Fathers and Sons, Fort Robinson
July 20-22: Homeschool Conference, Casper Mountain
August 8-12: Wyoming Lutheran Youth Camp, Lander

THE NEXT ROUNDUP

The next Roundup will be delivered to congregations around May 20 (June 2021 issue).



Wyoming District Round-Up

May 2021

District Website: www.wylcms.org

“Here I Stand” on the Word in My Community

“...REMEMBERING YOU IN MY PRAYERS...” (Eph. 1:16)

For **Eunice Boehlke**, as she mourns the death of her beloved husband, **Rev. Vernon Boehlke**

For **Rev. Ralph Jaeger** (emeritus, Laramie), health

For **Jennifer Wittrock** (wife of emeritus Rev. Michael Wittrock), diagnosed with cancer.

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

St. Paul’s, Sidney is being served by **Rev. Allen Strawn (St. Paul’s, Bridgeport)** during the vacancy. The congregation is holding discussions with **Salem, Gurley** and **St. Paul’s, Potter (Rev. Ted Bourret)** about forming a multi-point parish.

Rev. Travis Sherman (Grace, Gordon) is serving **Grace, Merriam, NE** (Nebraska District) while it considers its future.

Here I Stand: God’s Word in My Community

Justice: When John the Baptist condemned Herod Antipas for marrying his brother’s wife, he was not merely preaching the law in order to gain repentance. He was declaring divine justice (Matthew 14:4). Herod’s marriage violated divine law, and he deserved punishment. His imprisonment and execution of John was an act of governmental injustice.

Justice is a fundamental duty of government, in fact, its most basic mandate. The government that ceases to be just no longer represents God as His minister (Romans 13:1-7). Unfortunately, the meaning of “justice” is unclear in our public discourse. It means “fair,” of course, but by what standard of fairness? Who decides what’s right and what’s wrong? Furthermore, some people equate justice with social and political power— “No justice, no peace.” What is justice? And why should Christians care about it?

Justice is the exercise of divine judgment on man (or angel) on the basis of divine law. Justice is the punishment or reward that an action deserves. Justice is related to truth: Truth is correspondence to reality, the way things are. Justice is correspondence to divine law, conforming to what is morally right, what is merited or deserved. Justice is the concern of all people. Government represents God in working civil justice.

God is the source of all justice and the final Judge. “I the LORD love justice” (Isaiah 61:8). He is the source of all truth and divine law. All just laws flow out of and express this true and eternal law of God. Even those without God’s Word know the basics of divine law, because it is written on their hearts and written into the creation, including the creation of man and marriage, family, and community. All people have a knowledge of justice because that’s how God made us.

Justice is both personal and communal. We are personally and individually responsible for our own actions, just and unjust. We get what we deserve. But offenses against justice violate not merely individuals, but all people, because all people live and are judged by the same divine law. All communities are bound together by the same divine law. The murder of one man damages all people, not just the dead and his family. The violation of marriage and the marriage bed inflicts injustice upon all people, not just the immediate casualties of consenting adults. Theft violates the law of property for all people, not just the deprived owner. Justice for one means justice for all.

Why should Christians be concerned about justice? Just this: All justice is divine justice. There is continuity between what we call civil justice and spiritual and eternal justice. All justice works on the same law. It derives its authority from the same Lawgiver. Its basic tenets are found written both into nature and the human heart, “so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). There will be no understanding of divine justice where there is no civil justice. We who confess the justice of God must concern ourselves with justice for our neighbor.

Christians, it is true, know the Law of God best, because God reveals it to them perfectly in Holy Scriptures. But Christians also know that all violations of this law are against God: “against You, You only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4). And while civil governments are to uphold God’s law through their maintenance of just civil laws and just judgments in court, God’s justice will hold all men accountable for all sin, especially the sin of unbelief.

But divine justice has an inseparable companion. Justice must always be paired with mercy. First, if there is no true justice, there can also

be no true mercy. All that remains is the lust for power. But second, where justice is upheld, there it must be tempered with mercy. Mercy withholds the full punishment of sin. Mercy recognizes and has pity on the weaknesses and failings of man. Justice without mercy destroys us all. Justice without mercy is intolerable and produces only punishment and death. Justice without mercy is for demons. It is the very picture of hell.

We learn “the quality of mercy” from God, our just and righteous Judge, who had compassion upon us and in mercy sent His Son to bear our sin upon the cross. Jesus suffered the full punishment of justice for us. In His atoning death and resurrection, justice and mercy have met and kissed. The fruit of that kiss—the forgiveness of sins—is forevermore an act of both justice and mercy. “Righteous Judge, for sin’s pollution Grant Thy gift of absolution Ere that day of retribution” (TLH 607.11).

REFORMATION 500: The Aftermath of Worms

Luther’s great confession at the Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521, was followed by further negotiations intended to persuade him to change his mind and recant. When these failed, Luther was dismissed and departed on April 26. On April 28 he wrote a letter to the Emperor repeating the substance of his confession, and the next morning dismissed the Imperial Herald (whose presence guaranteed his safety) with the letter to deliver to Charles.

Two other events on the return journey are noteworthy. Luther preached at Hersfeld (May 2) and Eisenach (May 3), despite being forbidden to do so by the Emperor. This action violated his safe-conduct and potentially endangered both himself and those who heard him. He later explained to his friend George Spalatin,

... they had forbidden me to preach while on my way.

Nevertheless I said that I had not consented that the Word of God should be bound; and this is true. . . The condition that the Word of God should be bound was not within my power [to uphold], nor did I agree to it, and even if I had agreed to it, it would not have been binding since it would have been against God’s will. (AE 48.226)

Luther held God’s command to preach the Word as higher than the commands of government. His example gives encouragement to pastors and congregations in times of tribulation and persecution.

On May 4, by a secret arrangement of the Elector, Luther’s party was attacked some way outside of Eisenach and Luther was taken captive. His captors took him by forest paths and a circuitous route to the Wartburg Castle, which was to be his home and place of refuge for the next 10 months. The Elector Duke Frederick was determined to preserve the life of his theologian. On May 25, two days after Frederick had departed, the Diet recessed and issued the condemnation of Luther known as the Edit of Worms.