



Guard the Good Deposit!

Psalm 46 2 Timothy 1:1-14 John 8:31-36

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I GREW UP IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD. My home church was Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cedar Falls, Iowa. It was the only church I knew growing up. *Here is a picture of it.* My parents had me baptized soon after I was born, we always went to church each week, I learned about the Bible stories in Sunday school, I loved Vacation Bible School, I learned to appreciate Advent and Lent midweek services, I studied hard during confirmation classes and I looked forward to youth group meetings. **I grew up in the church** --- and looking back at it, **it is one of the greatest gifts that God has given to me.**

Maybe your story is *similar* to mine; **or**, maybe your story is exactly *opposite*.

In whatever way God worked in your life to bring the Gospel to you, **it is the most significant gift that you have received from God's good hand.** St. Paul describes the Gospel as a “**deposit**” that you are to **guard** for the rest of your life.

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you--guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.
2 Timothy 1:14

The “good deposit” is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that God has given to you through faith. The Gospel is the ‘good news’ that God sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world, and that forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to you by grace through faith and never by your own work or effort.

You are to **guard this good deposit** with the help of the Holy Spirit. The word “**guard**” means to *protect, take care of, watch over*; it means to act like a guard so that something is not *harmed or stolen*; it is *keeping something safe*. We are familiar with the phrases “be on your guard” as opposed to being “caught off guard”.

You are to be **VERY CAREFUL** with the gift of the Gospel that God has given to you: you are to **guard the good deposit.**

Today we celebrate the Lutheran Reformation. The story of the Reformation is one about guarding the good deposit of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Five hundred one years ago, Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic monk, posted his **95 Theses** on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The 95 Theses were 95 bullet points meant for a theological discussion in a university community concerning the sale of indulgences -- **indulgences are the false teaching that you could buy the forgiveness of sins with money.** John Tetzel was the Roman Catholic salesman that the Pope sent to Germany to sell indulgences, and he used a little jingle that went:

*"As soon as a coin in the coffer rings,
a soul from purgatory springs."*

The sale of forgiveness of sins outraged Luther, and he wanted to discuss the whole idea of indulgences on the university campus where he taught. However, thanks to Gutenberg's newly invented printing press, the **95 Theses** were widely circulated. The 95 Theses began the events of the Lutheran Reformation – where God worked to guard the good deposit of the Gospel, which had been neglected, *and even stolen*, by the medieval church.

During Luther's time, in the Middle Ages, Roman Catholicism was not just a church power, but also a world power. Seven hundred years earlier the Roman Empire became the "Holy" Roman Empire when the Pope crowned Charlemagne as Emperor on Christmas Day, 800AD. Roman Catholicism went on to become a world power and **terribly corrupted** the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The medieval church taught a works righteousness way of salvation. They taught that God would bring you into the church through baptism, but then you had to make up for any sin you committed after baptism by your own work and effort.

- Doctrines such as **Indulgences, Penance, and Purgatory** were created to give people a way to **pay, work, or suffer** for their sins and gain eternal salvation.

- People were also taught to **pray to the “saints”** to help them. They claimed that “saints” were people who were so good in their lifetime that they had earned “extra” good works which they could give to you if you prayed to them after they died.
- People were taught that **Christ was an angry judge** that could only be appeased through His mother, Mary. So, an entire system of prayers and worship of Mary was created. You have probably heard of the “**Rosary**”, and a prayer called “**Hail Mary**”, and a song called “**Ave Maria**”.
- **Faith** was turned into a work of man rather than a gift from God.

Throughout the “dark ages”, in Roman Catholicism, people were taught that they had to be righteous in and of themselves. Men had to find a way to please God by their own works and efforts, otherwise they would be lost forever. The Gospel was lost in the medieval church.

As Martin Luther studied scripture, he soon learned the truth of the Gospel; he discovered that grace, faith, Scripture, and Christ Himself had been abandoned in the medieval church; he realized that the Roman Catholic Church **had not been** “*guarding the good deposit.*”

Over the course of time, with lots of meetings and councils, studying and writing, stress and angst, fighting and bloodshed, the Gospel was once again the centerpiece of the Holy Christian Church. The Reformation spread across Europe like wildfire, the world was changed, and people heard the good news that **God sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world, and that forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are by grace through faith, and never by your own work and effort.**

As Lutheran Christians, this is our heritage; and, even today our focus is always on Christ and Scripture. We treasure the gifts of grace and faith that God has given to us. It is only in Holy Scripture that we learn about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that brings eternal salvation through faith alone!

Grace is important to us as Lutheran Christians. Grace is a word that means “gift”; and it teaches us that the forgiveness of sins is a gift from God’s good hand to us. God gives you all the gifts of salvation --- freely because

He is rich in mercy and great in love towards you. You cannot earn salvation, pay for it, suffer or work for it. Salvation is not a reward God owes you, it is a free gift! A gift of God's grace!

Faith is also important to us as Lutheran Christians. Faith is a work of God, it is not your decision, intellect, will, cooperation, or “*accepting Jesus into your heart.*” **That's nonsense!** The Bible stresses that faith is not your work or effort, but 100% God's work in your life through the Gospel.

Grace and Faith always point us to Jesus; and it gives us the confidence and assurance that our sins are forgiven. The assurance comes from knowing that salvation is not dependent on yourself, but on Christ. What a relief!

St Paul describes the Gospel of Jesus Christ a “good deposit” --a deposit that God has placed in you. The Lutheran Reformation is a story of standing guard over the good deposit of the Gospel! As Lutheran Christians, we continue to stand guard over the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit!

Your personal, individual faith story has intersected with the Lutheran Reformation. Our congregation is here today because of the work and sacrifices that started over 500 years ago. The Lutheran Reformation is part of our shared faith story. Whether you grew up in the Church like I did; or if you came to faith later in life --- we are united in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; and we value Grace, Faith, Scripture, and Christ Himself! God connected you to the Gospel, and even the Lutheran Reformation, as He worked in the events of your life to bring you to faith.

Today, realize that God has given you a tremendous gift, like a “**valuable deposit**”, a deposit of forgiveness, life and salvation; a deposit of grace and faith; of Scripture and Christ Himself!

So be very careful:

“guard the good deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit!”

AMEN!