



1546^{AD}

KEY DATES IN THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION

Isaiah 55:6-11 Romans 10:5-17 John 15:1-17

October 9, 2022

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476 years ago Martin Luther died. It was around 3am on February 18, 1546

The man whom God used to reform the Holy Christian Church died in complete faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Ironically**, Martin Luther died in the same town in which he was born. **Sadly**, Luther died rather suddenly, and His wife Katie was not by his side¹.

Martin Luther was in the town he was born in, Eisleben, negotiating peace between two brothers. Earlier in the week, while leading a worship service, he had to end his sermon early because he was not feeling well. He rested for the next two days, and it got worse on the third day. It appears that Luther had a series of heart attacks.

When Luther died, a scrap of paper was found in his pocket, and in his own handwriting he had written ***“We are beggars, This is true.”***²

These words are not only a confession of sin, but also of faith. Luther believed that without Christ, he was nothing. He had nothing to offer God for his salvation; no money, no good works, no prayers, **nothing**. He was like a beggar relying on the goodness, grace, and generosity of God.

¹ Luther was working about 70 miles from his home in Wittenberg. There were 16 people in the room when Luther died, including his two sons Martin and Paul. He was 62 years old. By this time in Martin Luther's life, he was surrounded by people who were writing down everything he said and did. Once it became apparent that his death was near, they carefully documented everything that happened.

² The full note that Luther wrote said this: “Let nobody suppose that he has tasted the Holy Scriptures sufficiently until he has ruled over the churches with the prophets for a hundred years.” What he writes next gives us a profound insight into Luther's faith and life. He wrote, “Wir sind alle Pettler. Hoc est verum.” These Latin and German words read, “We are beggars (written in German). This is true (written in Latin).” Gleaned from “Commemoration Of Martin Luther (Death) February 18” by James Baneck

AND SO DO WE.

Like Luther, we confess that we are *poor miserable sinners* -- or to use Luther's word, *poor miserable "beggars."* We are completely dependent on the Lord. Our hands are empty, our hearts are broken, our consciences are guilty, and our lives are sinful. We need God's goodness, grace, and generosity -- and that is found only in His Son, Jesus. In Christ, you will always find God's generous grace and goodness -- **ALWAYS! EVERYTIME! WITHOUT FAIL!** God sent Jesus to rescue you from sin, deliver you from death, and reconcile you to the Father. In Jesus you find God's generosity, grace, and goodness: both now as you live; and someday, when you are on your deathbed!

Martin Luther had a restless night; he slept, and then he would wake up with chest pains. He knew his time was short. Throughout the night he would remind himself of the promises of God. Here are some of the passages that Luther turned to:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16
"Our God is a God of salvation, and to GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death." Psalm 68:20
"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word." Luke 2:29
"Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD, my faithful God." Psalm 31:5

LUTHER QUOTED THIS VERSE 4 TIMES THE NIGHT HE DIED.

These passages brought peace to Martin Luther as he was dying. They reminded him that his life was in the Lord's hands, and that he had the gift of eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God did not abandon him on the day of death. Peace at death comes from confidence in Christ. Peace comes from knowing and believing the promises of God and the gift of eternal life.

The promises of God will also give you peace at the time of death. Death does not change the promises of God; God will not abandon you on the day of death. Through faith in Christ, death is the entry into eternal life in the Kingdom of heaven. The promises of eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ comfort you at times of death; the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day

gives you the confidence that you too will rise from the dead on the Last Day³. You have hope in Christ, confident faith of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting.

God has given you this gift of eternal life in the waters of Holy Baptism; He reassures you of these gifts when you *take and eat* and *take and drink* of His Body and Blood in the Lord Supper; and He teaches you about these gifts in His Holy Word. Hope in Christ is trusting the promises of God; when you trust the promises of God you have peace --> both in life, and *on the day of death*.

Martin Luther had peace. The night he died his pastor was at his bedside; and he asked Luther, *“Reverend father, will you remain steadfast in Christ and the doctrine which you have preached?”* and with the most breath he could muster, Luther replied **“Yes!”**

Everything Luther had worked for led up to that **“Yes!”** The Lord had worked through Luther to recover the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation was not a work of man; but a gift from God. Everything is **Yes!** in Jesus! All of God's promises are **Yes!** in Jesus. You could say that's what the Lutheran Reformation is all about⁴!

It's all about Jesus! The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only place where you will find peace at the time of death; only Jesus has risen from the dead and destroyed death! In Christ you live! In Christ you are forgiven! In Christ you have a home in heaven! Salvation is not man's work; it is God's gift! You have the certain hope of eternal life by faith alone, grace alone, and in Christ alone! Like Martin Luther, you too will be able to say **Yes!** to the promises of God when you are on your deathbed.

The morning after Luther died, they had a service in Eisleben. Then they took Luther's body, draped with a white pall, the 70 miles back to his home in Wittenberg.

³ There are many promises of eternal life in Christ, for instance: **Job 19:25-27**: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” and **John 11:25-26**: “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

⁴ Earlier in his life, Luther had written the Smalcald Articles as a theological “last will and testament.” In that document he confessed, “The first and chief article is this: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, died for our sins and was raised for our justification (Romans 4:24–25). He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), and God has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all (Isaiah 53:6). . . . Upon this article everything that we teach and practice depends. . . . Therefore, we must be certain and not doubt this doctrine.”

He was accompanied by 50 horsemen, steeple bells rang from the churches, and by the time they arrived in Wittenberg, thousands of people were following along. They buried Luther in the Castle Church in Wittenberg, right below the pulpit⁵. His grave remains there to this day.

Martin Luther was a special gift God gave to His Church. God worked through him to return the Gospel to the forefront of the Holy Christian Church. After the Apostles, there is no one who has made such an impact on the Christian Church in these New Testament times like Martin Luther. He served a unique, one of a kind role in the Kingdom of God⁶.

1546AD marks the end of that first generation of Lutheran reformers⁷. By God's grace, the gospel has remained front and center in our Churches for over 500 years!

The Lord has worked in your life to bring the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to you so that on the day of your death, you too will have peace, comfort, and hope in Christ and the gift of eternal life that He freely gives to you.

1546AD helps us think about and prepare for our own death, reminding us of the confidence we have in the Risen Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

KEY DATES IN THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION
1517AD 95 Theses: the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation
1521AD The Diet of Worms
1530AD The Augsburg Confession
1546AD † Martin Luther
1580AD The Book of Concord
1847AD The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
1974AD Trinity Lutheran Church Litchfield Park, Arizona

⁵ Luther's body was brought into Wittenberg in the morning. Rigor mortis had set in and his right hand had curled into the position of holding a pen while his left hand was flat out as if holding down a book. (You can see the "cast of Luther's face and hands at his death" with a simple internet search.) He was buried in the church in Wittenberg. A year later, the Roman Catholic Emperor Charles V was victorious over the Lutheran Schmalkalden League at the Battle of Muhlberg. He made a victory trip to the Castle Church in Wittenberg; some around him encouraged him to have Luther's body dug up, burned, and the ashes scattered; but Charles refused and replied that he did not make war against dead men.

⁶ It's worth reflecting on the unique role of Martin Luther in the history of the Church! He would be in a category like John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary, those whom the Lord gave special, one-of-a-kind roles for the benefit of the Gospel and the Holy Christian Church. His contemporaries considered him the angel proclaiming the eternal Gospel in Revelation 14:6-7. While we recognize Luther's significance, and thank the Lord for him, we do not hold him to be a prophet nor apostle, neither inspired nor inerrant. Luther had many flaws, just as John, Mary, and each of us. Our loyalty is not to him, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Lutheran" is just the name history has given to those who believe what Luther believed about the Gospel: that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

⁷ Sad postscript: Luther's wife Katie lived a rough life after Martin's death; she experienced war, famine, pestilence, and poverty. In 1552, 6 years after Martin's death, Katie was riding in a wagon which tipped over, throwing her into a canal; she died 3 months later from her injuries.

Lord of the Church,
we thank you for Martin Luther and the
boldness and courage you gave him to
reform the Church.

We thank you for the clear light of the
gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for revealing to us that
salvation is by grace alone, faith alone, and
in Christ alone.

Give us your Holy Spirit so that we may
remain faithful to you in our lives,
and someday, to die trusting in your
promises.

In Jesus Name, Amen!

Isaiah 55:6-11

Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

7 Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the Lord.

9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,

and do not return to it

without watering the earth

and making it bud and flourish,

so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,

but will accomplish what I desire

and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Romans 10:5-17

Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” 6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11 As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”^c 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” 16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

John 15:1-17

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.