



1847^{AD}

KEY DATES IN THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION

2 Tim 3:10-17 Gal 2:15-21 Mark 4:30-34

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There are two main reasons why entire church bodies, *denominations*, can drift so far into apostasy. The first and foremost reason is that they *deny Holy Scripture as the authority* in the Christian faith and life. For one reason or another, the Word of God is **minimized, neglected, or even denied**. Once Scriptural authority is lost, then any false teaching or deceptive doctrine will enter the church.

The second reason that entire church bodies, *denominations*, drift so far into apostasy is because they *compromise with the world*. Worldly people get into leadership positions and want to be “progressive” and “modern” in order to *attract* more people. They have all kinds of pious words and schemes to justify this. Once the church opens its doors to worldly ideas and ways, the Commands of God are forsaken and the Gospel of Christ is abandoned.

It is easy to see this *pattern* when you study the history of the Christian Church. A *denial of Scripture* and a *compromise with the world* destroy entire church bodies – *denominations*. Over the past several weeks we have been looking at “**Key Dates in the Lutheran Reformation.**” Today we will jump out of the Reformation era of the 1500s and move to the year **1847**, and the beginning of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod¹. The *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* is the national church body, the *denomination*, that we as a congregation belong to here at Trinity.

In the mid-1800s, a group of Lutheran Germans immigrated to the United States to escape religious persecution. The government was requiring them to merge with other churches in order to have one national church. These Lutherans realized that this was a compromise of their faith which they could not accept. So they organized and immigrated to the United

¹ The roots of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod trace back to 1847, when Saxon and other German immigrants established a new church body in America, seeking the freedom to practice and follow confessional Lutheranism. Initial members, which included 12 pastors representing 14 congregations from Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Michigan, New York and Ohio, signed the church body’s constitution on April 26, 1847, at First Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Chicago, Ill. <https://www.lcms.org/about/lcms-history>

States. They sailed up the Mississippi River and settled in Missouri just south of the St. Louis area. After a host of troubles and tragedy, they formed what was then called “*The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States*”². 100 years later, the name was shortened to simply “*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*” – which is its name today³.

Unlike most church bodies, we are considered a very **conservative** church body. There are two key reasons why the *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* is theologically conservative; and *these two reasons are why we have not drifted into apostasy like so many other church bodies*.

The first is because we hold that the Holy Scriptures are the sole authority in the Holy Christian Church⁴. We usually just say *sola Scriptura* to summarize this: **ONLY SCRIPTURE!** We hold that the Bible is the Word of God and the only authority in matters of Christian faith and life. Holy Scriptures are inspired and inerrant; they are the voice of Christ teaching His Church; they are the power of Holy Spirit to save and sanctify people. **The Bible is the Word of God and the only authority in matters of Christian faith and life.**

Here is an example of how Scripture teaches that to us:

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse! Galatians 1:8-9

A verse like this teaches us to hold to the Word of the Apostles, to the New Testament, to the Word of God. As Lutherans, we then echo this in our confessions – we *believe, teach and confess* this:

“We have another rule, namely, that the **WORD OF GOD** shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel.” SMALCALD ARTICLES

² For a detailed and riveting account of the Saxon emigration, see “Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri 1839–1841” by Walter O. Forster. This is the story of our *direct* spiritual ancestors of the conservative, confessional Lutheran tradition.

³ The word *Missouri* was retained in the name to remember our historical roots; and the word *Synod* comes from two Greek words that mean “to walk together.” Today, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod is about 6,000 congregations that “walk together” in the same doctrine. There are congregations in every state; and we have fellowship with many other conservative and confessional Lutheran church bodies around the world.

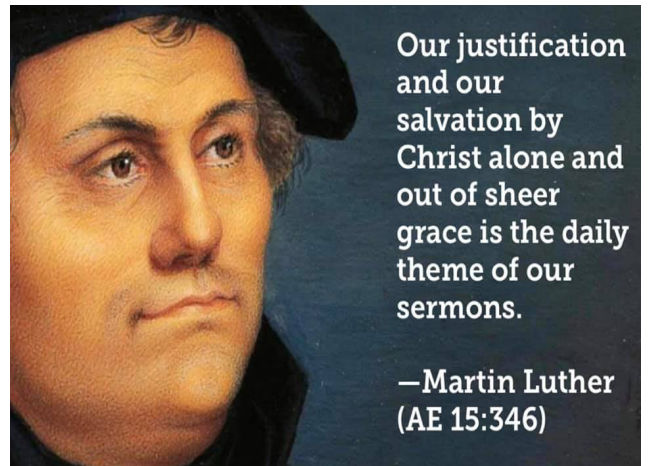
⁴ In Theology, this is called the “Formal Principle” – the source of authority. Other churches may claim to hold to the Word, but they supplement it with something else, such as the pope, reason, tradition, other books, a charismatic leader, or the changing times we live in. The LCMS has maintained her faithfulness by holding to the Word of God alone as the sole authority for the Christian faith and life.

Martin Luther and the Reformers held that the Bible was the Word of God and the only authority in matters of Christian faith and life. **That remains our bold confession even today⁵!** *The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel!*

The second reason why the LCMS has not fallen into Apostasy is because we keep the *Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ* in the forefront of everything we do⁶. We usually just say *solus Christus* to summarize this: **ONLY CHRIST!**

Everything about the **Lutheran Reformation** was about Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the World. Jesus is the center and focus of everything that we believe, teach and confess. It is His work alone that saves us; His perfect life and sacrificial death is the culmination of everything revealed in Holy Scripture. His resurrection from the dead on the Third Day proves that He is God and He is our Savior. The Christian faith is not about us and our good works; it is not primarily ethics, morals and values; it is not about loving and accepting the ways of the world; *it is first and foremost about Jesus and His work of salvation for us!*

We would die in our sin and guilt if it were not for Jesus. Our works, our morals, nor our love will save us. We need Jesus. We need the Son of God. That is the message of the Christian faith; that is what the Holy Christian Church is to preach and teach. **It's all about Jesus!**



Here is an example of how Scripture teaches that to us:

For what I received I passed on to you as of **first importance**: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

⁵ Over the past 200 years, every denomination has had its own version of “the Battle for the Bible”, where efforts were made to minimize, neglect, or deny the authority of the Bible. Almost all denominations lost those battles. The LCMS had this battle also in the 1950s - 1970s, culminating in what is known in our circles as “the Walk-out” and “Seminex”. We won the battle, but lost many pastors, people, and congregations. Those who left ultimately formed the extremely liberal “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” in 1988.

⁶ In Theology, this is called the “Material Principle” – the most important teaching. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of our theology and our understanding of the Christian faith. It is frequently referred to simply as “Justification by faith.” It is reflected in the Reformation “solas”: grace alone, faith alone, and Christ alone! The LCMS has maintained her faithfulness by holding to a Christological focus in all things.

A verse like this teaches us that Christ and His work of salvation is the most important thing about Scripture and the Christian Church. As Lutherans, we then echo this in our confessions, and we *believe, teach and confess* this:

The first and chief article of the Christian faith is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification." He alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" The Book Of Concord, Smalcald Articles, II.i

By focusing on Christ and His work of salvation, we do not get distracted by false teachers nor the ways of the world. There is a lot of good to be done in the world -- but the most important thing is the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of salvation. At the end of the day, when a person is on their deathbed, their good works are meaningless. The only thing that's going to matter is if that person believed in the Lord Jesus Christ or not. **That's the message of the Christian Church: to teach people about the Lord Jesus Christ and His life, death, and resurrection that forgives sins and gives eternal life!**

The second reason why the *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* has **not** drifted into apostasy like so many other *denominations* is because we keep the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ front and center in everything that we do!

For me personally, I consider being a part of the *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* a great blessing from God's good hand⁷. I thank him that I grew up in it and that's all I know. I have studied all the other denominations, and am **ABSOLUTELY CONVICTED** that we teach the truth of God's Holy Word. I hope you have the same conviction. In a day and age when entire church bodies – *denominations* - are falling into such great and obvious apostasy, **WE ARE NOT.**

By God's grace alone, the *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* has been able to hold to Holy Scripture as its authority, and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as its focus. What happened in **1847** is a part of our lives even today!

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

⁷ Do you have this same conviction? The LCMS certainly has its flaws and weaknesses, but it is not in its doctrine and confession of the truth of God's Holy Word. If you would like to talk about your conviction in the faith, I'd be glad to speak with you. I have some resources that may help you think through your conviction and what it means. Send me an e-mail if you'd like to meet and talk; or if you would like some resources to study.

Lord Jesus Christ,
there are many who proclaim false teachings
under Your Name;
and many who would lead your people astray.
Protect us from them and their poison;

please send the Holy Spirit
and give us strong faith, bold courage, and
deep conviction
like the German Saxons before us.

Help us to preserve Your Word and Doctrine
during our time here on earth,
**so that those who come after us may rightly
worship you and believe Your Holy Word.**

For the LCMS,
and the faithful Lutherans who have gone
before us,
we praise and thank you! Amen!

2 Timothy 3:10-17

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, **11** my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra--which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13** while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. **14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Galatians 2:15-21

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. 17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Mark 4:30-34

Jesus said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? **31** It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, **32** yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." **33** With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. **34** He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.