

## **KATHARINA von BORA**

Saturday, May 9

Reading: Proverbs 31:10-31

Katharina von Bora<sup>1</sup> was born in Germany in 1499. Her mother died when she was five years old and her father sent her to a boarding school. At age 9, Katharina was moved to a Cistercian convent in Saxony. At 16, she became a nun. She grew dissatisfied with life in the convent and was intrigued by the news of the Reformation being led by a professor and monk in Wittenberg named Martin Luther. She and twelve other nuns secretly sent a message to Luther that they wanted to escape. On April 5, 1523, Luther recruited a merchant, who often delivered herring to the convent, to help. He smuggled the nuns out in barrels on his fish wagon and brought them to Wittenberg.

Three of the girls returned to their families and within two years Luther had found husbands for all the escaped nuns except Katharina. During this time, she lived with various families while Luther tried to find her a husband. Several matches were attempted but none of them worked out. Finally, Katharina suggested that she would be happy to marry Martin Luther himself! This presented a challenge for Luther. He was 42 years old and Katharina was 25. He was also concerned about supporting a family. He did not accept any money for his books and lived on an unsteady, meager income, much of which he gave away to those in need. He was also worried that he would put a wife and family in danger. He was “public enemy #1” with the Catholic Church and many of the German nobles. But he finally gave in and he and Katharina were married in June of 1525. Luther said “his marriage would please his father, rile the pope, cause the angels to laugh, and the devils to weep.”<sup>2</sup>

Being the wife of a famous reformer was no easy task. Luther had been a bachelor for a long time and was set in his ways. He had to learn that there was now someone else to consider in his plans. They lived in the Black Cloister, the old monastery that had once housed about 40 monks. Now Katharina made it a home for her growing family. She and Luther would have 6 children of their own and also cared for orphans, nieces and nephews, and students and guests who stayed at various times. Katharina was a much better house manager than her husband. Those 2 years of waiting before she was married were spent learning how to run a household and be a good wife. She not only managed the household but helped those in need all over Wittenberg. Martin Luther was deathly sick several times during their marriage and his ‘Katie’ would nurse him back to health. He would finally pass away in 1546 after over 20 years of marriage.

By all reports this was loving marriage. Katharina would call her husband “Doctor Luther.” He had many playful nicknames for her including ‘Kitty, my rib’ and ‘my Lord Kate.’ “Luther called marriage ‘a school for character,’ and he was right. He realized that his own life was enriched because of the love of his wife and family.”<sup>3</sup> Katharina von Bora Luther is a shining example of a mother and pastor’s wife.

How can you be an encouragement to your pastor’s wife today?

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe. “Katherine von Bora” 50 People Every Christian Should Know, p. 9-15

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katharina\\_von\\_Bora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katharina_von_Bora)

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, 13