

October 31, 2010
Reformation Sunday
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Here I Stand

“Stand up for Jesus,” we are urged to do on this 493rd anniversary of the Reformation. And even as we sing the words, down through the corridors of history we hear a voice declare, “Here I stand!”

Dr. Martin Luther was talking about the Bible when he said that, about the Word of God. In fact, the image on the cover of today’s bulletin shows the great reformer holding a Bible close to his heart, as a way of kind of saying, “This is important to me” and “Here I stand!” He was taking a stand for Jesus when he said that—for Jesus, whom we heard again today proclaim that those who are truly his disciples are those ... who continue in his Word. Taking a stand.

It is significant that we should take the opportunity to celebrate “taking a stand” in a church service, because here in church is one of the most significant places in our life where we actually take a stand; publicly, boldly, actively, consciously, seriously.

- You may not have thought about it, but a wedding is “taking a stand”—involving vows that are made publicly, boldly, actively, consciously, seriously.

“In the presence of God and these witnesses” two people “take a stand” on the side of love and respect, of trust and faithfulness, of commitment that your promise will be terminated by nothing less than death! In a world that no longer respects marriage, at your wedding you take your place next to one another and say, “Here I stand!”

- Confirmation is such an occasion too, isn't it, an occasion on which you promise to remain faithful to your Lord, to continue in His Word—when publicly, boldly, actively, consciously you “take a stand” on the Lord's side. “Here I stand!”
- Baptism likewise, which Confirmation reflects, involves “taking a stand.” And serving as a sponsor at a Baptism, is likewise “taking a stand” on the Lord's side, promising to stand with the child here being claimed by God. And parents who bring their child for Baptism are “taking a stand” as well ... as do parents who continue to be aware of their baptismal promises to lead their children, by instruction and by example, to take their stand on the Lord's side, continuing in his Word and thus proving to be his disciples indeed.
- Confessing the Creed ... confessing our sins ... coming forward to receive the Lord's body and blood ... In all of these words and actions we are doing more than just practicing or rehearsing for what we are to be living out there—we are affirming it as well. Here in church is where it happens, where we learn to turn to Christ and to the Gospel which proclaims him our Lord and Savior, and to say, “Here I stand!”

What makes it possible for us to “stand up for Jesus,” of course, is the Good News which is constantly proclaimed within these walls, the Good News that Jesus Christ took a stand FOR us.

- Like Martin Luther, he stood trial ... and refused to back down. “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice,” Jesus said to Pontius Pilate. “Here I stand!”

- Years before, at only 12 years old, your Savior stood and held his own in the temple, discussing with the teachers there. “I must be in my Father’s house,” he told a nervous Mary & Joseph “Here I stand!”
- In the River Jordan Jesus took a stand. He would be baptized as one of us, “to fulfill all righteousness,” He explained to a bewildered John. “Here I stand!”
- In the wilderness Christ stood his ground. Against the onslaughts of the tempter he replied, “It is written!” and “Again it is written!” The Word of God alone would determine His response. “Here I stand!”
- How often in His ministry did Jesus respond to those who sought to budge Him from His stand: “Have you not read?” “What do the Scriptures say?”
- Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Peter drew his sword to in a vain attempt to defend his Teacher—the Lord replied, “Then how could the Scriptures be fulfilled?” (Matthew 26:52)
- “Day by day I stood in the temple,” He told His captors then ... and it was true: they knew where He stood.
- He stood before the cross, I suppose. Can you picture the Lord..., looking up through the blood dripping past His eyes ... at what awaited Him there at Calvary? They would taunt Him to come down from that cross that day, to reject the stand that He had taken on the Word of God ... but as Luther did 1500 years later, Jesus would not recant. Where did you think Luther got it from?

Did you ever notice how frequently in our Lord’s resurrection appearances it says that “He stood among them”?—behind locked doors in the upper room, on the road to Emmaus, at the shores of Galilee.

After He had risen, the Christ declared: “Here I stand!”, triumphant from the grave, the promised Messiah who came to stand by us, with us, for us ... and who promises even now that he will come and call his faithful to stand with Him once more—to do for all of us what He did for that little girl whose father came and stood before the Lord beseeching help.

Those wonderful words, filled with God’s power Incarnate; “Little girl, I say to you, arise!” And she stood before them at Jesus’ word ... and so shall we! “Continue in my Word,” He says. Stand up for Jesus.

And we are given grace to answer, “Here I stand!” Beginning here.

There is strength in taking a stand publicly; Martin Luther learned that and demonstrated it. Strength, too, in being assured that we are not alone in the stand we take. You see that in a wedding, of course, where two proclaim that they will stand together ... and in Confirmation and Baptism where family and friends surround ... in the fact that we make our confessions here together ... perhaps most vividly enacted in the Sacrament of Holy Communion—which means sharing, being together, having in common.

Here ... where the Gospel of Christ is central, the Word of God foundational. “Stand up for Jesus,” we are urged—beginning here, publicly, boldly, actively, consciously ... and moving then to there, publicly, boldly, actively, consciously.

“Stand up for Jesus,” we are urged. “Continue in my Word,” says he who took his stand with us. Indeed. We can do no other. “Here I stand!” God help us.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep you hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

*Based on a sermon by Arden W. Mead. © 2010 by Creative Communications for the Parish, 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026.
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