

## The Diet of Worms - Here I Stand

As we find ourselves in October, with Reformation just a few weeks away, it is of note that it was 500 years ago that one of the most pivotal moments of the reformation occurred – The Diet (a formal deliberative assembly) at Worms. In April of 1521, Martin Luther found himself in Worms, Germany standing before Emperor Charles V, the Electors and a few other dignitaries. On a table was a pile of Luther's books, which the examiner John Eck (not of the Leipzig debate fame) asked Luther to simply answer if they were his books, and if he recanted/disavowed them or not. In a barely audible voice, Luther replied, *"The books are all mine, and I have written more."* When again asked whether Luther wished to recant or defend them all, or at least some of them, Luther asked for more time to consider his answer, as the books were not all the same type and he could not simply recant all of them. After some debate amongst the emperor and the diet, Eck brought back the answer and expressed amazement that a theological professor should not be ready at once to defend his position, particularly since he had come for that very purpose. Nevertheless, the emperor would grant him 24 hours.

The next day, before a much larger crowd, when again asked by Eck if the books were his and if he recanted of them, Luther in a much bolder voice gave a long and detailed answer in both German and Latin of why he could not recant any of his books. Eck replied, *"Martin, how can you assume that you are the only one to understand the sense of Scripture? Would you put your judgment above that of so many famous men and claim that you know more than they all? You have no right to call into question the most holy orthodox faith...I ask you, Martin, answer candidly and without horns, do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?"* Luther replied, *"Since then Your Majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."*

500 years later, we find ourselves in similar situations. We find ourselves under pressure from an unbelieving world to soften the Word of God -- to say it is only "a" word of God, one amongst many; to say it is open to interpretation; to say that Christianity is only one of many equally viable religions and truth; to say that there are other ways back to heaven, other paths of salvation than just Christ; that we soften the Law, tolerate sin and call evil good; to join the world in asking satan's question: "Did God really say...", and denying His Word "you will not die".

And when we stand up for Truth in this relativistic age and proclaim the Word of God in its entirety and purity, it can be hard to face the question as did Luther – "Are you alone in all the world right?" The "sciences" (what is so often put forth as science today, which is really just another belief system based on erroneous interpretation of data) and philosophies and belief systems of the world speak against you. All those people, institutions, public opinion and beliefs, are you alone right? A difficult question to hear, but with God's word we can answer with all godly boldness, YES. There is only One Way, One Truth, One Life, and only One way back to heaven/salvation, One source of true Life in a condemned and dying world -- Grace alone, through Faith alone, in Christ Alone (proclaimed/revealed by Scripture Alone). And thus, we join in our Reformation heritage and proclaim this Truth with love – boldly, without wavering, yet with love rather than arrogance, desiring to point all to Christ Who has died for all.

In this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Diet at Worms, we are left like Luther holding to the Word of God alone despite pressure -- to join with Luther and say: "I cannot and I will not recant anything...Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

Pastor