

**What it Means to be a Lutheran**  
**Pastor Ryan Brodin Abiding Savior Lutheran Church**  
**October 23, 2024**

**Opening Prayer**

**Overview of the Course: History, Theology, Spread of Lutheranism, Lutherans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Reformation: What do you know? Names? Places? Dates? Issues?**

**State of the Church Pre-Reformation:**

**Some practices of the clergy (especially the high ranking clergy):**

1. Simony—selling of ecclesiastical posts
2. Nepotism—giving important positions to relatives
3. Absenteeism—being a bishop or archbishop of somewhere you did not even live
4. Pluralism—holding more than one ecclesiastical post
5. Luxurious lifestyles spending the church's money like kings
6. Families, having illegitimate children and then practicing nepotism
7. Political greed and want such as raising armies and attacking other “nations”

**Great Schism of the Church 1378-1414:**

- In 1309, Popes began to reside in Avignon, France, not Rome.
- They also were puppets of the French government, thus this period, which lasted 70 years, is often called “**The Babylonian Captivity of the Church.**”
- Finally, **Gregory XI** moved back to Rome, then promptly died
- Urban VI** was elected and crowned pope by the Cardinals BUT
  - He began to reform the church stopping nepotism and simony
  - The Cardinals decided he had gone mad (too much reform too quickly), so they joined together and elected a new pope, **Clement VII** who resided in Avignon.
- Now there are two popes elected by the same cardinals!
  - All of Europe had to choose up sides. They choose based upon political alliances that date back hundreds of years. Basically, France, Scotland and Spain vs. Germany, England and Italy.
- The Cardinals realized this was not good, so they called the Council of Pisa in 1409 to end the Schism
- The Council of Pisa elected **Alexander V** to be pope, and now there were three popes!
- In 1414, the **Council of Constance** met to both reform the church and name a legitimate pope.
  - Martin V** was elected and was recognized by all of Europe as pope.
  - The Council of Constance also tried to reform the church, issuing decrees against simony, pluralism, and absenteeism, but in reality had little effect.
- Thus began a fifteenth century battle for power in the church between the papacy and councils, the papacy eventually wins out. And the papacy greatly benefits from simony, pluralism, nepotism, and absenteeism!

-How can a priest be righteousness when they have to buy their position? Clergy were uneducated, monasteries were run by illegitimate sons of kings, clergy had no idea of penance, how could the people? The church could no longer be trusted. It was time for change!

### **John Huss:**

-Became rector of the University of Prague in 1402

-No intention of altering doctrines of the church, only to restore Christian life to higher ideals (especially clergy)

-Huss decided not to obey because the pope was unworthy of obedience because the pope does not obey the Bible and the Bible is the authority by which every Christian is judged.

He was excommunicated in 1411.

-Huss decided also that only God can grant forgiveness (something we take for granted) and therefore selling indulgences was wrong. Besides, the money was being spent by the pope on his army for political reasons.

-In 1415, Huss was given a chance to defend his beliefs at the **Council of Constance**. He was given "safe-conduct" by **Emperor Sigismund** of Bohemia.

In Constance, they didn't care to hear what he had to say, so they tried him as a heretic. They ordered him to recant and he replied, "I will recant if someone can prove to me that I am a heretic."

He was imprisoned and on July 6, 1415, burned at the stake for his beliefs. The Council wanted to appear strong, so they burned him.

-Bohemian followers of Huss organized, especially the nobility, and rebelled against the Council and the Church.

-All of Bohemia, including the King, was considered heretical by the pope

-Catholic troops marched, unsuccessfully, several times on Bohemia, but were always defeated

### **History of the German Reformation:**

#### **Martin Luther:**

Born 1483 in **Eisleben, Germany**.

Father was a miner and later owner of some foundries.

Strict up-bringing, Luther hated the regiment

His father wanted Martin to be a Lawyer, it was prestigious, Luther did not want to be a lawyer

In 1505, he is caught in a storm and prays to St. Anne, the patron Saint of travelers, that if he lives, he will become a monk. He lives and stays true to his word

In 1505 at the age of 22, he joins the Augustinian Monastery in Erfurt

**Augustinans** are poorest of poor monks (vows of celibacy, obedience, poverty)

Luther is a deep thinker and is recommended to become a priest by his superiors

Luther is obsessed with salvation which he believes comes from good works and the Mass

But he realizes that he cannot stop sinning, he beats himself, starves himself, but nothing works!

God reminds him of his father, strict and unforgiving  
He realizes that he does not love God, he hates God!  
He begins to read the mystics who believed that only love for God was necessary for salvation. But Luther did not love God and could not stop sinning. What was he to do?  
His superior thought if he went out and lectured and taught on the Bible, he would learn how to answer his questions.  
So in 1512, after receiving a doctorate in theology, he was sent to teach Old Testament at the **University of Wittenberg**, a small university in a small and meaningless town.

### **Life in Wittenberg:**

In Wittenberg, he began to lecture, and thus read extensively, on the Bible  
It was when reading Romans 1:17 that he read that in the gospel, “the righteousness of God is revealed.” But what was the justice of God?  
NOT the punishment of sinners as he previously thought, but God’s justice and righteousness that comes from outside, from God. This God freely gives!  
“I felt that I had been born anew and that the gates of heaven had been opened.  
The whole of Scripture gained new meaning. And from that point on the phrase ‘the justice of God’ no longer filled me with hatred, but rather became unspeakably sweet by virtue of a great love.”

**Pope Leo X** sold the Archbishopric of Germany to **Albert of Brandenburg** for a huge amount of money. He then granted Albert the power to sell indulgences. Half went to Rome, half to Albert.

Leo X wanted to finish St. Peter’s in Rome

**Johann Tetzel** was the indulgence salesman (used car salesman) of the time  
“When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs!”

October 31, 1517, Luther posts the “**95 Thesis**” which attacked the sale of indulgences and the abuse of the practice by the pope

Thought his theses would only be read by theologians, not translated, reprinted, and disseminated by nationalists who wanted a unified Germany outside of external control (i.e. the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope)

Luther was also taking on the money machine of the archbishop and the pope, very powerful men.

Albert sent the “Thesis” to Leo and asked him to stop Luther. **Maximilian I**, Holy Roman Emperor, was enraged by this friar from Wittenberg and asked Leo to take care of him. Leo asked his order, the Augustinians, to get rid of him. They called him to **Heidelberg** where Luther feared they would burn him (as they did Huss) but there Luther found many supporters who liked his ideas. Luther was allowed to return to Wittenberg to teach and preach as before.

Luther is then summoned to the **Diet of Augsburg**, a meeting of all the princes and nobles of the empire, in 1518 to defend his ideas.

Emperor Maximilian I was there and Leo sent **Cardinal Cajetan** to represent him. Cajetan went to secure support of the German princes against the threat of the Turks. The Catholics were even negotiating with the Bohemian Hussites because they needed their support as well. Leo instructed Cajetan to simply arrest Luther, not to listen to him. Luther went, convinced that he would be burned at the stake like Huss

**Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony** (where Wittenberg is located) secured safe conduct for Luther

Frederick was Luther's greatest supporter not because he thought he was right, but because he wanted Luther to have a fair trial.

In fact, Luther preached against relics and Frederick had one of the greatest collections of relics in all of Europe that he charged lots of money for people to see.

Professors at his university were telling him Luther was right, and he wanted to be known as a just and fair ruler—he wanted to protect Luther from the crime that occurred to Huss 100 years earlier

ALSO—politics played a role in Luther's success:

Maximilian I dies, leaving **Francis I of France** and **Charles I of Spain** as the forerunners for Holy Roman Emperor. Charles is already king of Spain and the Low Countries, Francis is King of France. If either of them also have control over Germany, they will become unrivaled in power, even by the pope. Leo X does not want this, he wants a German prince to be elected to spread out the power more in Europe so he can retain some control as pope. He wants Frederick the Wise to be Emperor, so he cannot go after Luther whom Frederick protects. Eventually, Charles I, a staunch Catholic, is elected Emperor, and takes the name Charles V. Frederick, Leo X, and Luther lose.

**Leipzig debates, July 1519**

Luther is pulled into a debate with **Johannes Eck** in Leipzig. Eck is a prominent Catholic scholar. Eventually Luther admits that he believes the **Council of Constance** was wrong in killing **John Huss** because Huss was right: a Christian, armed with scripture, is more powerful than all the popes and councils. Now he was in trouble

BUT—remember Luther's good friend, politics

German nationalists liked his anti-roman ideas. Humanists liked his theology. His followers made good use of the time given them by the hesitancy of Leo X and they spread his ideas. The reformation was spreading quickly in Germany

Luther was excommunicated by Leo in June 1520 in a document called ***Exsurge Domine***, which Luther promptly burned publicly upon its arrival with much fanfare

**Diet of Worms, 1521**

Luther is summoned before the Emperor and all the German princes

He was shown his books and asked if he wished to recant any of his writings

He said he would not unless someone convinced him he was wrong (sounds like

Huss)

The Emperor had no desire to debate him, so Luther answered his question, not in Latin as he had been speaking, but in German: “My conscience is a prisoner of God’s Word. I cannot and will not recant, for to disobey one’s conscience is neither just nor safe. God help me. Amen.”

Luther took on the pope by burning the *Exsurge Domine*, he now was taking on the Emperor. “God help me” was definitely an appropriate response!

“Luther is now to be seen as a convicted heretic. He has twenty-one days from the fifteenth of April to recant. After that time, no one should give him shelter. His followers also are to be condemned, and his books will be erased from human memory.”

### **Edict of Worms**

Luther is in big trouble, BUT he has a friend, Frederick the Wise (again) who has him kidnapped and brought to the castle of **Wartburg**. Here he lives for a year incognito. He translated the Bible (NT only) into German. Later he also translated the OT. This added fuel to German nationalism and was significant in shaping the German language.

He returns to Wittenberg because his followers are implementing his ideas too quickly and taking them to extremes. They are destroying statues and art, reforming worship, and listening to false prophets.

Again, Luther’s friend is politics:

Charles V is fighting a two front battle for power in Europe. One is against Francis I of France the other is against the Turks who are at the gates of Vienna. Therefore, he cannot go after Luther and the Reformation because he needs the German princes to fight with him.

Leo X dies, and the new pope, **Clement VII**, sides with Francis and attacks Charles. The German princes, many of whom are Lutheran, attack Rome on behalf of Charles and sack the city. The Pope flees and the buzz is that God is punishing the Anti-Christ. Eventually Charles makes peace with Francis and the pope.

When he turns his attention to “the heretics” the Turks become a threat. So he, with the help of the German princes, defends Vienna.

Meanwhile, back on the farm, Luther’s ideas are spreading.

### **Peasant’s revolt of 1524-1525:**

Peasants are treated harshly by princes and they revolt believing Luther’s ideas support their economic demands (which Luther denied)

Luther tried to persuade the peasants not to use violence

He agreed that their grievances were just and the princes should listen

Eventually backed the princes as they made a violent end to the revolt, urging them to be merciful.

As a result, many of the peasants left the Lutheran church and many of the princes blamed Lutheranism for the revolt and they re-instituted Catholicism in their kingdoms.

**1523 The Diet of Nuremberg** adopted a policy of tolerance toward Lutherans

**1526 Diet of Spires**, in the midst of Charles struggles with Francis and the pope, allows German princes to choose their religious affiliation. South became Catholic, North became Lutheran (Munich Catholic, Berlin German)

**1529 Second Diet of Spires** recants the freedom of princes to choose religion and the Lutheran princes protest (get named “Protestants”)

1530 Emperor presides at **Diet of Augsburg** and is presented the “**Augsburg Confession**” written mostly by **Philip Melancthon** (Luther’s right hand man), laying out Lutheran beliefs and signed by the Lutheran princes. The emperor gave them about nine months to recant or face the consequences, Protestantism was in danger!

The German Lutheran princes decided to form a common front called the **League of Schmalkald** to face the Emperor in battle (almost certain they would be defeated) and prepared for war.

BUT, now enters Luther’s friend again, politics. The Turks are back and Charles needs a united Germany.

This led to **The Peace of Nuremberg in 1532** allowing Lutherans to practice their faith within the Augsburg Confession and avoiding a war within Germany, for now. Lutherans again used the time given them by politics to spread its beliefs into more and more territories.

**Phillip of Hesse** led the League of Schmalkald which slowly won over several other princes, although mostly for personal reasons, not religious. Soon Protestants were the majority in Germany and could elect a new Emperor. But:

1. Phillip of Hesse was a bigomist, supported by Luther and other leading reformers, and this tarnished the movement
2. The Duke of Saxony, although protestant, refused to join the League and instead sided with Charles (for possible personal gain after Charles defeats the other princes)
3. Luther dies in 1546 leaving the Protestants without their spiritual leader and without their political leader (Phillip)
4. Charles, finally free from his prior political problems, attacks the League of Schmalkald in their weakest moment capturing Phillip and other key leaders.

However, Charles was not able to capitalize on his defeat of the League of Schmalkald because it was too late, Protestantism was deeply imbedded. So he imposed an Interim which provided the German princes, divided by their loss, the rallying point they needed. They all opposed this Interim agreement  
Soon they rebelled against Charles, this time with the Duke of Saxony, and the help of French.

At the **Peace of Passau**, Phillip and other leaders are released, and freedom for princes to choose for their people Lutheranism or Catholicism is granted.

Charles, tired of fighting, retires his crown to his brother, Ferdinand I, who abandoned religious persecution altogether, upsetting many powerful Catholics and allowing Protestantism to spread.

**Next Week: Lutheran Theology-What we believe...**

**Closing Prayer**