

## **Lutheran Confessions (Luke 12:4-10)**

- 1) Fear God Alone
- 2) Publicly Acknowledge Him

The year was 1530 and things were looking a little dicey for the Lutherans in Germany. For 13 years the Roman Catholic Church had been trying to bring in Emperor Charles V to forcibly stamp out Martin Luther and his teachings about the Bible's sole divine authority. Charles V had other things on his mind during those 13 years. He had the Turks on his east, the French on his west, and his own dear Pope in the middle working his political agenda.<sup>i</sup> But things finally calmed down enough in 1530. Charles V could now deal with the Lutherans in a town called Augsburg.

But things had changed since Luther's 95 Theses in 1517. It wasn't just Martin Luther anymore. Now there were political officials, a university, and dozens of learned scholars who all agreed – Martin Luther's sole focus on the Bible and its authority was what God intended. Lutheranism was becoming a big deal. So Emperor Charles V called for a meeting in Augsburg where the Lutherans would collect their beliefs into 1 book.<sup>ii</sup>

We call that book the Augsburg Confession. It and 6 other similar writings make up the Lutheran Confessions in 1 big book called the Book of Concord. If you would like to look through it, you can find a complete version online<sup>iii</sup> or look at my copy<sup>iv</sup> after the service. This morning we're just going to talk about the first of the Lutheran Confessions – the Augsburg Confession of 1530.

Now the Augsburg Confession may not seem like a big deal in today's age. It's not unusual to have different beliefs and documents outlining the details. But in 1530, the Augsburg Confession was a line drawn in the sand. It spelled out the clear differences between the Catholic emperor and the Lutheran officials. To help put these differences into perspective, it's like the tension between a hard core Democrat and Republican. Both of them want our country to be the best ever, but seldom will they agree on how to do it. When the Lutheran official signed the Augsburg Confession, they were pitting themselves against the emperor and the Catholic Church.

What could lead them to make such a divisive stand? It's the Bible and what our Lord tells us in it. Perhaps the Lutheran officials had these verses from Luke chapter 12 in mind where Jesus says to the disciples, **"I tell you, my friends, do**

**not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”<sup>v</sup>** We are to only fear the one who has the authority to condemn to hell. That’s God alone. Therefore we are to fear God.

But what does it mean to fear God? First of all, it isn’t about being afraid of God. To fear God means to have a sense of respect and awe. God has all power and existed before time began. He made the universe in 6 days with his voice alone. But for the Christian, there’s another element to fearing God. There’s also trust in his gracious love. God isn’t content to sit up in heaven and observe us from afar. He’s daily involved in the inner workings of our lives to bring his will to completion – to protect us from Satan and his temptations. So when you hear that we are to fear God, let it be with respect for his almighty power and with trust in his love.

But does the fear of God guide your priorities of life? Or do the concerns of this world dictate it? It’s so easy to get all worked up by the things in the world and leave God out of our plans for the future. Do you schedule time for your personal spiritual life as you do for meals or health? Do you get into God’s Word during the week so that it’s not just on Sunday morning when you consider what God has freely given to you? If you’re like me, you probably don’t as much as you should. When you choose your friends, do you make sure they build you up in your Christian faith? Do you make a conscious effort to share Christ with your friends who don’t believe in him as you do? Because if they are to fear God, they not only need to respect his almighty power, but also to trust in his gracious love. Or perhaps you’re looking at your legacy when you pass away. As you draw up your wills and estate plans, have you taken God into account by considering how you can spread his kingdom on earth while you enjoy the blessings of heaven?

As you look at your sinful life, do you have the fear of God? Or is it afraid of God and his justice? But you don’t have to be afraid of God. Because we have a Savior who died for us. The very same Jesus who spoke these words about fearing God tells us how valuable we are to God. Jesus says, **“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”<sup>vi</sup>** A sparrow isn’t very important, let alone 5 sparrows. Yet God’s eyes on the sparrow. He knows us so intimately that all the hairs on our

heads are numbered. We are worth far more than sparrows. We are worth the death of God's own Son.

It was for sinners like us that Jesus came down to earth and teach us such eternal truths like we have read from Luke chapter 12. Jesus who took God's will into account with everything he did while on earth. He willingly placed himself under the same law of God that we are born under. He kept every commandment and followed every law knowing it would anger the Jewish religious leaders to no end. He allowed himself to be arrested and nailed to a cross while bearing the weight of everyone's sins. He gave his very own life so that we don't have to die to. That's how valuable we are to God.

So as you look up to God and see his almighty power, don't be afraid of him. He loves you so much that he sent his Son to die in your place. All your sins are forgiven. God will continue to work his almighty power for your eternal well-being. And when you face opposition from the authorities of this world, don't be afraid of them either. God is more powerful than they are. Even if they do their worst and end your life, it's God you'll see afterwards. And he'll take you up to be with him in the heavenly bliss that's waiting for you.

This is the confidence those German officials had as they signed the Augsburg Confession in 1530. They didn't know how Emperor Charles V was going to react or if they would leave Augsburg in fear for their lives. But they were not afraid of the emperor's authority. For they knew God has ultimate authority over this life and the one to come. And as they signed their names to the Augsburg Confession, it wasn't only the emperor who heard their confession of faith. The angels of God heard about it as well. As Jesus told the disciples, **"I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God."**<sup>vii</sup>

Can you imagine the rejoicing that must have happened in heaven in 1530? Can you fathom the significance of our decisions in life? What we do in our little corners of the world has results up in heaven. When we publicly acknowledge our faith in Jesus our Savior, the angels above hear about it and rejoice. I think that's pretty cool because it also shows how important our decisions are. What we do here has eternal results up there.

As I see you all gathered here today, I don't doubt what your confession of faith is. You're here to learn about God and what he promises in his Word. It's my joy

to be here and share these precious truths with you from the Gospel of Luke. But what our Lord encourages us to do in these verses is to publicly acknowledge him before others. Not to puff up our egos because the angels are talking about us. Rather it's to tell others about their Savior and what he has done for them.

It's not just you and me who are far more valuable than many sparrows. It's all people, even those who disown Jesus and get talked about before the angels of God. They need a Savior just like you and I do. They too have a Savior who died on the cross so that we all may live in peace and forgiveness forever. Do you know anyone like this? Publicly acknowledge your faith to them and tell them about their Savior. Invite them to worship and Bible study next week as we consider to learn what makes a Lutheran a Lutheran. Bring them to them the Civano Ministry Center on Wednesday afternoon to chat with Pastor Koehler and learn some key Bible words. Take your worship folder home with you and look through the announcements. Maybe you'll find something going on at Grace you can invite them to.

If you can't think of anyone who needs to hear about Jesus, go out and find them. They aren't far away. If you're afraid to do it on your own or don't know where to begin, look to your church for opportunities. Volunteer for our Kids Carnival at Grace-Vail in just a few weeks where we expect to have hundreds of people come who don't regularly worship with us. Keep your eyes peeled for community events and moving trucks in your neighborhoods. And if all that fails, let your life be a constant, public acknowledgement of your faith in Christ with the words you type online and the places you go in person. You never know what other people see and what they may ask you because of it. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Michael de Ferdinandy, *Charles V: Holy Roman Emperor* [article online] (Encyclopedia Britannica, 26 June 2017, accessed 10 August 2017); available from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-V-Holy-Roman-emperor>.

<sup>ii</sup> James Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and his Career* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003), 230-234.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php>.

<sup>iv</sup> *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000).

<sup>v</sup> Luke 12:4,5. All biblical quotations are from the NIV 2011 unless otherwise stated.

<sup>vi</sup> Luke 12:6,7.

<sup>vii</sup> Luke 12:8,9.