

EPIPHANY 5
February 5, 2012

Text: Luther's Small Catechism

Theme: "Being Religiously Offensive for 494 Years!"

Open your bulletins and read with me, Luther's explanation of the third article of the Apostle's Creed:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

As the exiles sat in Babylon and waited for God to deliver them, so too do we sit in our exile and wait for Christ to return and take us to our promised inheritance. And while they waited, they were tempted daily to abandon the one true God who is slow to act in the minds of human beings and adopt the Babylonian god's which seemed so much more interesting. And while we wait, we are tempted to abandon the one true God who is slow to act in the minds of human beings and adopt the god's of this place and age because they seem so much more interesting. Well, according to conventional wisdom and supposedly, Jack Dempsey,

"The best defense is a good offence." And if that is true, then our goal is to be religiously offensive and thus defend ourselves from

being led astray by society's gods. That means that political correctness is out the window. We live in a free society and you can make whatever choices you want in life, but I am free to say that they are bad choices. That's why I often ask the question, "Do you really want to know what I think?" Because most people just want me to agree with whatever nonsense they have dreamed up to justify the choices they want to make.

It is amazing to watch people try to adjust God's Word to fit their worldly desires. They invent new theology. They come up with words that God never said. They commit all manner of religious stupidity thinking that if they say it enough, it will come true. But it does not work that way and that is Luther's brilliance in his explanation of the 3rd article of the Apostle's Creed. Because we know that we are weak in the face of human religion, we quite literally call the Holy Spirit to do what we cannot do for ourselves and in so doing, as your faith grows, you will become more and more offensive to the world.

Guess what? God really means that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. God really does and always has intended for men and women to marry and stay together for life. It is actually God's will that inconvenient babies be born and raised in His Church to his glory and for his service. He actually thinks that listening for

his voice and seeking to follow his will is more important than being wealthy and successful. But my friends, all of these truths about God are offensive.

The Scriptures are brutally clear on what is and what is not God's intent for human beings. We don't have to like it. And we need help to follow it or even believe it. That is where the Holy Spirit works. God is offensive to our human desires. He is offensive to our logic. He is offensive to our perceived human needs and no amount of human logic or political correctness is going to help us from being offended and offensive. But that offensiveness is a good defense. By being unafraid of the offensiveness, we defend ourselves from falling into the huge dung pile that has become American Christianity. I'll give you one practical example.

Our political correctness and failure to apply God's Word has led to the disintegration of the family. There is not just one sin that has caused it but multiple departures from God's plan and we always have good rational reasons for what we choose to do but the point is, when we depart from God's plan, we do damage. We first accepted that fathers have to work 80 hours a week so it is okay for them not to parent. Then we decided that mothers could work a like amount because women are equal to men and we will just hire people to raise the children. We quit eating together, praying

together, working together. We had lots of money, nice homes and cars, and the kids all went to college but people were discontent which led to affairs, alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence and divorce and then the problem perpetuated in the children because we taught them that money was more important than family. Career was above worship and success was the almighty god. And now many are tired, unfulfilled and discontent. I wonder why? They got what they wanted. Maybe we shouldn't have been so politically correct when someone first said,

"Well, my husband has to work three jobs so that we can afford to buy a house in the suburbs. So he can't be home for dinner or come to church with us."

We expend way too much time trying to work our way around God instead of just acknowledging our plight and relying on the Holy Spirit to empower us to walk with God. Even Jesus rises early in the morning to pray. Even he is recharged before he faces the demons in this world.

If we do it our way we will be exhausted, unfulfilled, discontent and lost. God's way is offensive. His truth and unrelenting demand for holiness is offensive to us and we become offensive to the world because of him. But, the best defense is a good offense. Because, as Isaiah says,

“³⁰Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”