

“Be Ready to Confess Jesus”

2 Timothy 4:1-4 LWML 10-15-17

You have no doubt heard that the Lutheran Reformation is 500 years this year. While other later events could also mark it's birth, Luther's posting of the 95 theses on a church door in Wittenberg lit the fire.

But there is also a lesser known anniversary to celebrate this year. The Lutheran Women's Missionary League, LWML, turned 75 years old this summer. Since then it has done encourage and supported the sharing of Christ's gospel within our Church body and among partners and friends throughout the world.

In the last 500 or 75 years confessing the faith has become more difficult, and may get even harder in the years ahead. Yet God has promised that His church will not be defeated by any worldly or spiritual foes that come against her.

Thus we are called to be Ready to Confess the Gospel of Christ to an increasingly hostile world that desperately needs to hear it. It is central to our identity.

(2 Tim 4:1-2).

Though Paul wrote this to young pastor Timothy, he also knew we are all to be ready to share with those whom God places in our life. Proclaiming the salvation won by Jesus is not just “the pastor's job.”

While 90 percent of Americans claim that they believe in “God,” 60 percent of Evangelical Christians think there may be other ways to salvation outside of faith in Jesus. The need to be ready to confess the message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone is as pressing today as ever.

Especially so when you realize that the world now is just like Paul describes in in our text.

(2 Tim. 4:3-4) 1517 Europe was as confused as our own day. People worshiped saints, turned the Gospel in law by adding works to faith in Christ as necessary for salvation. Purgatory, images, relics, and other practices had obscured the Gospel of salvation in Christ alone.

This prompted Luther to ask, “What does it mean to be right in God's eyes?” His answer in the Bible was to keep God's law perfectly. Yet, he knew that he did not keep it sufficiently enough to win salvation.

Much struggle and study drove him to discover the righteousness of God is in Christ, who perfectly kept the law for us. The filthy rags of our sinfulness Jesus took to the cross where it was crucified it once and for all. In exchange God credited to us Christ's perfect righteousness. That is the gift received in Holy Baptism.

It took Luther a few years to work out all of the scriptural implications. But once he did he was ready to confess—and he did so to the end of his life in 1546.

How do we prepare ourselves to be ready to confess? Today in particular, as we've already noted, we want to recall the work of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, which is celebrating its diamond anniversary this year.

The LWML has had a marvelous impact on the mission efforts of the congregations, districts, seminaries, and other entities of our Synod. And it has done so always by carrying out faithfully its mission “to assist each woman of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the Triune God so that she is enabled to use her gifts in ministry to the people of the world.”

There is never a perfect time to start an organization like the LWML, but could we have chosen a time more challenging than 1942? The world had been at war for three years and the United States had joined the effort in 1941. Rations were short, many young—and older!—men were preparing to fight overseas. Women were entering the workforce to fill the vacancies left by the new soldiers. The circumstances were challenging, to say the least!

Yet, on July 7-8, 1942, over 100 women—among them twenty-eight formal delegates—met in Chicago and established the LWML. Its purpose was to encourage a greater consciousness among women for “missionary education, missionary inspiration, and missionary service.” It also decided to gather funds for mission projects above and beyond the Synod's budget. From this humble beginning— and through the use of the now familiar “Mite Boxes”—the League has blessed the mission efforts of congregations, districts, and synod in amazingly powerful ways!

But there is more, as LWML historian Marlys Taeye Moburg has captured it so well:

...the blessing of the LWML, now also known as Lutheran Women in Mission, goes far beyond the millions raised for missions. Its benefits can be seen in faith deepened through Bible studies, in confidence built through leadership training, in the befriending of career missionaries, in blankets and clothing gathered for the impoverished, in food shared with the hungry and, above all, in the friendships nurtured and the lives changed by sharing the love of Jesus Christ.¹

“Time marches on,” as we all know so well, and it seems that as we age it marches at the double quick. The

Lutheran confession has always struggled against the intrusion of false teaching. But the Lord has been faithful and has raised up faithful pastors like Timothy who have preached the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified for our sins and raised for our justification. And the Lord has gathered faithful men, women, and children who have carried out the work of the Lord with zeal and devotion, meeting the challenges and opportunities to reach out to those who need to hear the Gospel. Simply put, our faithful God keeps His promises and we pray this Sunday and always that He will always enable us to be ready to confess. Amen.