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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
October 31, 2021  
Reformation Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 18:1-11; Revelation 14:6-7

Hymns: 224; 260:1-4; 261; 262

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Mark 13:5-11

And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. <sup>7</sup>But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end is not yet. <sup>8</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.

<sup>9</sup>"But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. <sup>10</sup>And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. <sup>11</sup>But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

## INTRO: The Diet of Worms,

It is perhaps one of the most dramatic events in Luther's life as well as one of the most memorable. It was a critical event in the life of Martin Luther and in the Reformation. It was April in 1521, 500 years ago this year that Luther was summoned before the Charles V, the emperor of all the Germanic states, known as the Holy Roman Empire. Charles the V was still a very young man, but a young man with immense power, the power of life and death over people. He was also a young man who was fiercely loyal to the Pope in Rome. He wanted this upsetting distraction going on within the Germanic states to be settled and gone. He summoned Martin Luther to appear before him and a council or diet of the all the important princes and many important bishops of the church in the city of Worms.

Luther had prepared to defend the truth of the gospel before the diet, but when the meeting began that wasn't allowed. He was presented with two questions. The first was whether the books and pamphlets displayed on a large table before were actually his, which they were. The second question was if Luther was ready and willing to recant, or retract, all that he had written. When Luther attempted to make distinctions between the different writings that wasn't allowed.

Luther asked for time to consider his response and spent that night in prayer seeking wisdom from above to reply properly before the Emperor Charles the V and the assembled princes of the Holy Roman Empire. Luther's life hung in the balance, and he knew it. We are quite familiar with Luther's response, as his words were reported for 500 hundred years. *"Unless I am convinced by Holy Scriptures,- for my conscience is taken captive by the Word of God – I cannot and will not recant, for it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience. Here I stand, God help me. Amen."*

Most clearly Luther's prayers the night before were heard and answered as the Holy Spirit guided him in confessing his faith while under great duress. Luther was hardly the first to be pressured to forsake the truth of the gospel, and he was hardly the last. He stands out as an example of faith, as an example of one

who found his strength in the authority of the Word of God, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

In this year which marks the 500 anniversary of the Diet of Worms may the Holy Spirit direct us in our faith life --

### **THEME: Following Luther's Example of Perseverance.**

It is all a matter of finding our strength and wisdom where Luther found his strength and wisdom, in the truth of God's Word. As we consider Jesus' words in our text, we will find the strength and wisdom to follow Luther's example of perseverance --

#### **I. Against the Deception of False Doctrine.**

Our text begins with Jesus' warning: "*Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many.*" (Mark 13:5-6) There have been many who literally claimed to be the Christ who has come into the world. There are many more who undermine the gospel of Christ and present a different "gospel" that is in fact not a gospel. Many refashion the teachings of Jesus to fit their own philosophy, or their own social and political agenda. Many false doctrines or teachings have made their way into visible Christianity that turn people away from finding their hope of life and salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus, to rather trusting in the ideas and works of men, trusting their own righteousness.

Jesus' words of warning are not to be taken lightly. Any and every false teaching detracts from the gospel of Christ and the glory of our Savior. Any and every false teaching is capable of undermining the faith of the innocent child of God.

Sometimes we are challenged by critics that we think we have a monopoly on the truth. The truth is in God's Word, in every passage of Holy Scripture. It is God who has a monopoly on the truth, and He has revealed His truth to us in His Word. We are called upon by our Savior to be on our guard and persevere in that truth of His Word. Jesus said, "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup>And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*". (John 8:31-32) When we abide in His Word

**we have the truth**, and we are not to depart from that sure Word of God. We abide in His Word, and we are set free from sin and death. We have the truth that saves! May the Spirit enable us to persevere in that truth, binding our consciences with the Word of God, as Martin Luther did steadfastly at the Diet of Worms.

False teachings are dangerous. We dare not just go to any church thinking that seemingly small differences in teaching can't matter all that much. Holy Scripture teaches us what Luther knew from personal experience, that is the deceiving power of false teaching. Paul wrote to the Romans. "*Note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*" <sup>18</sup> *For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*" (Romans 16:17-18) False teachers are a danger that must be avoided because they are capable of using smooth words and flattering speech to deceive. People can and do make false teaching sound so similar to the truth that simple sincere Christians are taken in by their fair sounding talk and lose the truth.

That is not the only trial to be faced by true Christ believers. In our text Jesus warned of troubling time in the world and the need for perseverance --

## **II. Against the Troubles of this World.**

Jesus said: "*But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.*" <sup>8</sup> *For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows.*" (Mark 13:7-8)

When we watch the news and hear about all the violence in this world, (and we don't even hear the half of it) we wonder, "what's going on?" There is a pandemic, and there are tensions, and rumors of wars. Murder rates are going through the roof in cities across the United States. It can all be very troubling for the child of God. Some might even suggest that the devil, the prince of this world, is in charge and not our Lord Jesus Christ!

Again, we should take a step back and consider what those who have gone before us have faced and endured with perseverance. That big meeting in the city of Worms was called because Charles V was desperate to unite the princes against the invading Turks who not only threatened German sovereignty but the Christian religion. As the Turks established their empire, they also imported the Muslim religion with the force of the sword. There were many who feared for the very existence of the Christian Church.

Luther kept His faith in the Lord. In the original German words of the hymn, “Lord Keep us Steadfast in thy Word,” Luther prayed that the Lord protect His Church from the Papist and the Turkish horde. Although this hymn was written 22 years after the Diet of Worms, the Turkish armies were still a continuing threat, coming right up to the borders of western Europe. Rumors of wars were as much a part of Luther’s life as they are today, or at any time in history.

And as for a pandemic, Luther lived and served as pastor in the midst of the black plague. When the plague ravaged Wittenberg Luther was urged to leave town for his personal health and welfare. He refused to leave Wittenberg, but boldly and faithfully ministered to his congregation as they suffered from the disease and the loss of loved ones.

Luther kept his confidence in the Lord who had secured eternal life for him in heaven. This was Luther’s hope that led him through many a dark day. We possess this same hope through faith in Christ Jesus.

*“Tho’ devil’s all the world should all eager to devour us we tremble not we fear no ill they shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will. He can harm us none! He’s judged! The deed is done! One little word can fell him!”*

(The Lutheran Hymnal 262:3)

Those words of Luther’s Battle Hymn of the Reformation remind us to keep our hope and trust in the Lord who strengthens us in perilous times that we might persevere in true faith in spite of world events that appear so threatening and uncertain.

Luther faced the specter persecution as well, and stood up to the threats knowing that the Lord was by his side, come what may! So may we also by the power of God follow Luther's example of perseverance –

### **III. In the face of Persecution and Intimidation.**

We go back to that fateful meeting in Worms. What would the emperor's reaction be to Luther refusing to withdraw his writings and teaching of the gospel? Charles V was outraged. He had granted Luther safe passage to and from Worms, so Charles didn't have Luther immediately arrested and burned at the stake as a heretic, although that was his desire. Charles did declare Luther to be an outlaw. That meant Luther no longer had the protection of the law, and anyone who would do Luther harm or even kill Luther would be doing a service for Emperor Charles. Luther's life was in peril. Prince Frederick who was Luther's prince, had Luther kidnapped and stowed away for safe keeping in the Castle Wartburg. Finally, upon hearing of the need for stable spiritual leadership back home Luther returned to Wittenberg, knowing that the Lord was his Protector. Was it dangerous, even life threatening? For this temporal life, yes, but for his eternal life, Luther was secure. This wasn't a matter of the boldness of Luther's character. It was a matter of faith in a bold and powerful Savior.

Hear again the words of our Savior: *“But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. <sup>10</sup> And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. <sup>11</sup> But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”* (Mark 13:9-11)

Jesus clearly states that we should expect opposition from the world, including the political rulers in this world, and that persecutions are to be expected. But we should not tremble. We should not fret. We should not worry about how we might defend ourselves any more than the Apostles. While the Apostles were

promised direct revelation from the Holy Spirit, we have the sure Word of God! As we study the Word and keep it in our hearts we also then have the words of the Holy Spirit to recite back in sure defense of the faith.

What is going on in this last age of the earth is exactly what Jesus said would be going on, even in the face of persecution. The gospel is being preached and going out into all the world. People in every nation under heaven are hearing the message of Christ crucified, and by the Spirit's blessing many are coming to faith.

Yes, there is opposition. We hear of brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering for Jesus' name' sake. It is very likely that we too will suffer for Jesus' name' sake in some manner. However, through faith we possess same certainty of God's love and protection as did the Apostles, as did Martin Luther. We too can be certain that come what may, we have life and salvation in Jesus' name. No one can take that away from us, and no one can stop that gospel of a crucified risen and exalted Jesus from going forth into all the world.

May we follow the example of Luther and persevere in true faith unto our end.

*“The Word they still shall let remain Not any thanks have for it;  
He's by our side upon the plain With His goods gifts and Spirit.  
And take they our life, goods fame, child, and wife,  
Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won;  
The Kingdom ours remaineth.”* (The Lutheran Hymnal 262:4)

**AMEN.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)