

04 - 95 Theses - 2017-10-22

Call to Worship: Isaiah 52:9

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 52:1-7

Sermon: "500 Years of the 95 Theses Part 4 - Matthew 13:44-46

Lord's Supper: Isaiah 52:13-15

Benediction: Isaiah 52:10

INTRODUCTION

October 31 this year will mark 500 years since God granted us, His church, Martin Luther's *95 Theses*, and the great Reformation that is said to have begun in earnest with their publication. So, I have been studying the 95 Theses, helped by Luther's published *Explanations* of them, with attention to the many scriptures Luther cited, to understand how his observations from the scriptures can be of great help to us today. Each week I am presenting the fruit of my study to you in the sermon by combining, arranging, and paraphrasing a few of the theses to show how the scriptures that Luther cited are applied to us by the 95 Theses.

First Week: Repentance as preached by Jesus not as imagined by men
Do Not Mistake What the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "Repent," and when He Commissioned the Church to Preach Repentance and Remission of Sins in His Name

When our Lord said, "Repent," (Matthew 4:17), [and when He commissioned His church to preach repentance,] He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance

[The repentance our Lord preached and commissioned His church to preach] cannot be understood as referring to [any outward religious exercise], as administered by [a pastor or by any person]

Yet [the repentance He preached, and commissioned His church to preach, does not mean something that does not produce] outward mortification of the flesh

[A preacher] cannot remit any guilt, except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God

God remits guilt to no one unless at the same time he humbles him in all things and makes him submissive

Second Week: Salvation by what Jesus Christ requires, not by what man requires
Do not heed what man says are the requirements for you to be saved, lest you receive a salvation that is only from men. Instead, heed what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ says is required for salvation, so to receive a salvation that is not from men, but from God.

Man-Made Requirements for Salvation Produce Only Man-Made Salvation OR
When a Man Preaches His Own Requirements for Salvation, He Necessarily Preaches
Only Whatever Salvation He Himself Can Provide

Yet People Are Deceived By High-Sounding Promises of Salvation By What Man
Requires

But Those Who Preach Salvation By What Man Requires Are Not Preaching Christian
Doctrine

Because Any Truly Repentant Sinner, Trusting in Jesus Christ for Salvation, Has All the
Blessings of Christ, Without Regard to Man-Made Requirements

Third Week: The Authority of Jesus Christ rather than the authority of mere men
Take care, because you are tempted to have some regard for the bible, and to think yourself a
Christian, while not actually receiving the Lord Jesus Christ on the authority of God the Father,
but instead receiving mere men on merely human authority.

It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, to commend these two things at
the same time: salvation for all who perform certain acts preached by men, and the need
of true repentance for salvation.

The Christian does not grow strong in the Lord by means of performing certain works
required by men on mere human authority; instead, the Christian grows strong in the
Lord as he exercises himself in the good works of love commanded by the Lord ---OR---
We Are Sanctified Not Through Works Commanded By Men, But Through Works of Love
Commanded By God

This week I've been working from the theses between 53 and 66, especially numbers 53-55 and
62-64. I speak to you, from the scriptures, as prompted by Luther's theses, on the value, the
preciousness, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the treasure of the church, as set against the
worthlessness to the church of things that are merely man-made.

**Learn to hold the gospel in the highest esteem, so as not to let anything of the flesh
take away its place of priority in the church.**

TEXT

Matthew 13:44-46 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man
found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (45)
"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, (46) who, when he
had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

BODY

Learn to hold the gospel in the highest esteem, so as not to let anything of the flesh take away its place of priority in the church.

- I. 62 The thing of greatest value in the church, the true treasure of the church, is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God in Jesus Christ, as preached according to the scriptures, the Word of God
 - A. The reason Luther made this point was that the indulgence preachers were talking about the church having a treasure called the treasury of merit: Luther: “They say that the saints during this life have contributed many more good works than were required for salvation; that is, works of supererogation, which have not yet been rewarded, but have been deposited in the treasury of the church”
 1. the indulgence preachers sold their indulgences on the pretence that the Pope could dispense to sinners who had not done enough good works to go to heaven the merits of such dead saints from the church’s treasury
 2. Luther labored to prove that although the church *does* have a treasure, and it *is* for the salvation of sinners, it is *not* a treasure consisting of the good works of the saints, but a treasure consisting of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - a) part of that work was done in Theses 56-61, especially Thesis 58, proving what things are NOT the treasure of the church
 - b) then in Thesis 62, Luther asserted that the the true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God
 3. In His explanations of Thesis 62, Luther cited scripture after scripture demonstrating the great value of the gospel; I’ll follow that explanation in the following several points
 - B. The gospel’s value demonstrated in how the Lord Jesus spoke of it
 1. He has spoken to us repeatedly in His parables of a master leaving His servants treasure, in such terms as *minae*, talents, riches, and *denarii*
 - a) yet when He returned to heaven, He did not leave those things to us; instead, He left us the gospel
 - b) this shows us that the gospel is the church’s true treasure
 2. By parable, as we read from Matthew 13:44
 - a) treasure hidden in a field
 - b) pearl of great price
 - C. The gospel’s value demonstrated by the praise given to the gospel messengers
 1. the gospel is such a treasure that even the feet of those who preach it are beautiful, as we heard the OT reading from Isaiah 52
 - D. The gospel’s value demonstrated by the value of the person whose work is the gospel message
 1. Luther: the gospel is a preaching of the incarnate Son of God
 2. He is before all things

3. By Him all things were created
 4. By Him all things hold together
 5. He is above all things
 6. the message of the gospel worked by Him must be the thing of greatest value
- E. The gospel's value demonstrated by the terms it proclaims
1. the terms
 - a) we cannot earn the blessings of the gospel by our own merit
 - b) its blessings are given to us by God
 2. therefore the gospel's value must be above anything we can come up with ourselves
- F. The gospel's value demonstrated by the effect on us sinners:
1. salvation
 - a) isn't it true that something that will save us we would consider very valuable?
 - b) surgery, medication
 - c) seat belts, antilockbrakes, air bags
 2. peace
 - a) isn't it true that something that will keep us at peace or restore us to peace we would consider very valuable?
 - b) how much does our country spend on
 - (1) state department
 - (2) military
 - (3) police
 - (4) border patrol

The thing of greatest value in the church, the true treasure of the church, is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God in Jesus Christ, as preached according to the scriptures

- II. 63, 64 The gospel, though it is the true treasure of the church, yet is unappealing to the flesh
 - A. Stated one way
 - 1. The gospel is the most appealing thing to the spirit, because it is spiritual; the regenerated soul of the Christian
 - a) delights in the gospel, because it is spiritual
 - b) despises man-made religious ceremonies, because they are carnal
 - 2. The gospel is repelling to the flesh, because it is carnal; the flesh
 - a) delights in man-made religious ceremonies, because they are carnal
 - b) despises the gospel, because it is spiritual
 - B. Stated another way
 - 1. The preaching of the gospel from the Word of God is odious to the flesh because it gives things of the Spirit the first place, and the things of the flesh last place.
 - 2. Man-made ceremonies, on the other hand, are delightful to the flesh, because they give the things of the flesh the first place, and the things of the Spirit last place.

The thing of greatest value in the church, the true treasure of the church, is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God in Jesus Christ, as preached according to the scriptures

The gospel, though it is the true treasure of the church, yet is unappealing to the flesh

- III. Because the gospel is true treasure of the church, although it is unappealing to the flesh, nothing must be allowed to displace the preaching of the Word of God in Christ's church.. 53, 54, 55
- A. 53 The preaching of the Word not to be cancelled in favor of something else
 - 1. Thesis 53 They are enemies of Christ who forbid altogether the preaching of the Word of God in some churches in order that indulgences may be preached in others.
 - B. 54 The preaching of the Word not to be shortened in favor of something else
 - 1. Thesis 54 Injury is done the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or larger amount of time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word.
 - a) Explanations: This is clear enough from a comparison of the two things
 - (1) the Word of God
 - (a) possesses dignity
 - (b) is necessary
 - (2) indulgences
 - (a) not necessary
 - (b) nor of much value
 - C. 55 The preaching of the Word not to be forgotten in favor of something else OR Nothing to be celebrated more than the gospel is celebrated
 - 1. if some man-made religious ceremony is worth celebrating with one bell and one parade, then the gospel is worth celebrating with a hundred bells and a hundred parades
 - 2. JRY: but of course the gospel is not going to be celebrated with a hundred bells and a hundred parades; therefore let man-made religious ceremonies not be celebrated with even one
 - 3. Luther: Nothing in the church must be treated with greater care than the holy gospel, since the church has nothing which is more precious and salutary, even the ceremonies instituted by our Lord Himself
 - a) even baptism is of less value - Paul came not to baptize but to preach the gospel (1 Cor 1:17)
 - b) even the Lord's Supper is of less value (1 Cor 11:26)
 - (1) it proclaims the Lord's death; that is, it preaches the gospel
 - (2) the church's law at the time was that the Lord's Supper was not to be observed without a reading from the gospels
 - 4. Preaching the gospel is what Christ commissioned His disciples to do

- a) Luke 24:45-47 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (46) Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, (47) and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION

The thing of greatest value in the church, the true treasure of the church, is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God in Jesus Christ, as preached according to the scriptures

The gospel, though it is the true treasure of the church, yet is unappealing to the flesh

Because the gospel is true treasure of the church, although it is unappealing to the flesh, nothing must be allowed to displace the preaching of the Word of God in Christ's church.

The preaching of the Word not to be cancelled in favor of something else

The preaching of the Word not to be shortened in favor of something else

The preaching of the Word not to be forgotten in favor of something else

Luther:

The gospel destroys those things which exist, it confounds the strong, it confounds the wise and reduces them to nothingness, to weakness, to foolishness, because it teaches humility and across. Thus Ps. 9[:5] says, "Thou hast rebuked the nations, thou hast destroyed the wicked; thou has blotted out their name for ever and ever." Let all those whose pleasure is in earthly things and in their own doing shrink back before this rule of the cross, complaining, "This is a hard saying" [John 6:60]. Therefore it is not surprising that this saying of Christ is most odious to those who desire to be something, who want to be wise and mighty in their own eyes and before men, and who consider themselves to be "the first."

The true glory of God springs from this gospel. At the same time we are taught that the law is fulfilled not by our works but by the grace of God who pities us in Christ and that it shall be fulfilled not through works but through faith, not by anything we offer God, but by all we receive from Christ and partake of in him. "From his fulness have we all received" [John 1:16], and we are partakers of his merits.

JRY:

veterans, graduates
singin',

SKY:

It's natural. There's nothing wrong with that. It's just the wrong time and place.

There is plenty of opportunity outside the church worship service appropriate for those things. Why does the church feel responsible to add to those?

They've done it for a long time (seemingly always).

If you've done it for a long time, you're stuck! Anyone who thinks that's not what they should do is in trouble.

53 They are the enemies of Christ and the pope who forbid altogether the preaching of the Word of God in some churches in order that indulgences may be preached in others.

Luther:

It is the duty and intention of the pope to desire the Word of God to be preached above everything else, always, and everywhere as he knows he has been commanded by Christ to do. How can we believe, therefore, that he opposes Christ himself? And yet our preachers dare to believe this as well as everything else.

54 Injury is done to the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or larger amount of time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word.

Luther:

This is clear enough from the dignity the Word of God possesses, and the necessity for preaching that Word, while the preaching of indulgences is neither necessary nor of much value.

55 It is certainly the pope's sentiment that if indulgences, which are a very insignificant thing, are celebrated with one bell, one procession, and one ceremony, then the gospel, which is the very greatest thing, should be preached with a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.

Luther:

Nothing in the church must be treated with greater care than the holy gospel, since the church has nothing which is more precious and salutary. Therefore it is the only single work which Christ enjoined upon his disciples at so many different times. And Paul says that he was not sent to baptize but to preach the gospel

1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Christ commanded that the sacrament of the Eucharist should be celebrated only in remembrance of him, and Paul says

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

It is better to omit the sacrament than not to proclaim the gospel.

The church has decided that the mass must not be celebrated without the reading of the gospel. Therefore God has placed greater importance on the gospel than on the mass, for without the gospel man does not live in the Spirit, but he does without the mass.

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.' "

as the Lord himself teaches at greater length in the sixth chapter of John.

The mass then renews those who are already a part of the body of Christ, but the gospel, the sword of the Spirit, devours the flesh, divides the kingdom of the devil, takes away the possessions of the strong, and increases the body of the church. The mass helps only those who have life; the gospel, on the other hand, helps everybody. . .

Therefore it would be better if they forbade the mass [rather than silence the gospel].

62 The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God. The gospel of God is something which is not very well known to a large part of the church. Therefore I must speak of it at greater length. Christ has left nothing to the world except the gospel. Also he has handed down to those who have been called to be his servants no such things as *minae*, talents, riches, and *denarii*, in order to show by these terms which speak of temporal treasures that the gospel is the true treasure.

Christ speaks of the gospel as treasure which is hidden in a field

Matthew 13:44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Gill:

the Gospel, which is a treasure consisting of rich truths, comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones; of the most valuable blessings, and of exceeding great, and precious promises here the field means the scriptures, in which the Gospel lies hid; and therefore these are to be searched into for it, as men seek and search for silver and hid treasures, by digging into mines, and in the bowels of the earth

And because it is hidden, it is at the same time also neglected.

Moreover, according to the Apostle in Romans 1:3-6, the gospel is a preaching of the incarnate Son of God, given to us without any merit on our part for salvation and peace. It is a word of salvation, a word of grace, a word of comfort, a word of joy, a voice of the bridegroom and the bride, a good word, a word of peace. Isaiah says,

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation . . .

But the law is a word of destruction, a word of wrath, a word of sadness, a word of grief, a voice of the judge and the defendant, a word of restlessness, a word of curse. For according to the Apostle,

1 Corinthians 15:56 . . . the strength of sin is the law.

and

Romans 4:15 . . . the law brings about wrath . . .

it is a law of death

Romans 7:5, 13

Through the law we have nothing except an evil conscience, a restless heart, a troubled breast because of our sins, which the law points out but does not take away. And we ourselves cannot take it away.

63 But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last (Mt. 20:16).

64 On the other hand, the treasure of indulgences is naturally most acceptable, for it makes the last to be first.

65 Therefore the treasures of the gospel are nets with which one formerly fished for men of wealth.

66 The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men.

D. Man-made religious ceremonies are of no value to the church

1. do we see in the scriptures the apostles instituting any?
2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - a) if I don't have a holy day called "Easter," then I'm not thoroughly equipped for every good work

Prelude: Trinity 207 "Christ Jesus Lay In Death's Strong Bands"

Camille: flute

Noah: trumpet

Anna: piano

Grace 171 "There Is Power in the Blood"

Camille: piano

Noah: trumpet

Anna: clarinet

Trinity 548 "More Love to Thee, O Christ"

Camille: sing

Noah: trumpet

Anna: piano

Trinity 207 "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands"

Camille: flute

Noah: trumpet

Anna: piano

Trinity 702 "Wonderful Grace of Jesus"

Camille: piano

Noah: Sing

Anna: Sing