

## Here I Stand

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Easter / Love; Man of Lawlessness; Holy and Righteous / Acts 3:11–21; Psalm 4; 1 John 3:1–7; Luke 24:36–49

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- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Resurrected King. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Our text comes to us from our Epistle lesson, especially verses 1 and 7:

**Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary 4-18-2021: Third Sunday of Easter**

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary 4-18-2021: Third Sunday of Easter**

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

Deceiving you over what God's Word says has been going on since the devil first appeared to Adam and Eve in the Garden. The Devil caused Eve and subsequently Adam to question God's Word. "Did He really say?" The devil has used the same tactic for thousands and thousands of years. 500 years ago the devil was trying to deceive Martin Luther. Martin Luther had written books, sermons, and other documents based entirely upon God's Word.

He was asked on this day back in 1521: "Martin, answer clearly and without any double-talk: Do you or do you not recant your books and there errors in them?" The Roman Church of the day was deceiving people and he wrote against those abuses and quoted directly from God's Word. At this moment in history, in Martin's life: "Would he give up the Gospel he had preached and taught, giving comfort and certainty to consciences in Christ?"

The world didn't know Christ when Christ walked on earth. The World didn't know Christ when John wrote his epistle. The world didn't know Christ when Martin Luther was teaching and preaching 500 years ago. What was Martin's answer going to be? With beads of sweat on his face, Luther responds:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen.”

The Gospel proclamation rang forth. The Truth of Jesus Christ was confessed and Martin did not bend when the religious and governmental tyrants were coming after him.

Today, 500 years later on this the Third Sunday of Easter, the Scriptures remind us what the Church stands for! John proclaims to us that we are God's children now. Jesus proclaims to His disciples after He is risen from the dead:

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“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem

Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and the certainty of peace with God and eternal life in His name is central to the Church. This is what the Church stands for! This is what we need to take a stand for!

We live in a world that does not know Christ. It's not much different than when Luther walked the earth. We live in a world that is very much hostile to Christ and His Word. We live in a world where the devil is trying to deceive us! We live in a World that has political power struggles, there are social and ethical debates. In these debates as we live in the left hand realm, as individual Christians and even as churches we may need to enter, because of what the Scriptures teach. We also must engage in helping out after disaster strikes. The

Church is Called to respond in times of need. Our mission and existence does not begin or end in politics. We are not a political action committee. We preach Christ Crucified risen from the dead. Our mission and existence does not begin or end in the social and ethical debates. We preach Christ Crucified and Risen from the dead. Our mission and existence does not begin or end with our aid in the aftermath of a natural disaster. We preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

That's where our Church's mission and existence begins and ends. That's who we are! We are the Children of God. That's who we are first and foremost. That's your identity. You are a Child of God! Your mission starts here at the cross and the empty tomb of Jesus. Jesus tells them, "You are witnesses of these things." This is what we witness to first and foremost.

Jesus Christ and what He did offers the hope for our salvation. As Christians though we also have the Law, it still affects us. It still calls us out for our sin that we commit on a daily basis. The law continues to expose us for who we are as sinners. We need that Word of the Law, the Word that tells us what to do and not to do so it drives us to the cross, it drives us to repentance, so that we receive the forgiveness of sins.

When we are forgiven, we no longer find ourselves seeking to fulfill the lives seeking the things of this world. We no longer find ourselves seeking to identify in the things of this perishing world.

The things of this perishing world we can never stand on. Yes, we try to. Oh we do! We may try to stand on our political beliefs! Those will fail us! We will sink if that is what we focus on. We may try to stand on our so-called political freedoms, but unfortunately those will fail us. We may try to stand on the good things that we do for the sake of our neighbor...but if we do that, we are not standing on the foundation which is Christ.

Martin Luther stood for his convictions which were based on Scriptures. He stood and would not waver in the face of persecution and potentially being burned at the stake as a heretic. Martin Luther would not waver. Today, dear Church, we cannot waver. We have to stand on the sure foundation that we

have, which is Christ Crucified and Risen from the dead. That's who gives us the foundation for our faith. Jesus Christ gives you that grace and hope to stand up in the face of deception.

Yes, the devil will continue to attempt to deceive you. He will continue to fight against you. That's His goal. He will say things like this: "Did God Really say that you shall not murder including the life in the womb?" "Did God really say that he created man and woman?" "Did God really say that you shall not commit adultery?" "Did God really say that a marriage between one man and one woman till death us to part?" "Did God really say that it is an abomination for two men or two women to be sexually active together?" "Did God really say that he created all things?" Yes God said that all life matters from conception to natural death...and the body still matters to God after death, since God is going to raise it. God did create you as a male or a female and does not want you to change that identity. God did say that you should not commit adultery. God did say that marriage is for life and between one man and one woman. God did say that homosexuality is an abomination. God did say that he created all things...and He did.

This is all Scriptural, but the World doesn't know it because it did not know Him, and because it does not know Him, it does not know us. There was a time when it was "easier" to take a stand for our faith, to stand on Christ the solid rock, the one who is Crucified and Risen." It's not very easy anymore. Christ didn't say it would be easy to be a disciple. In all actuality to be a child of God is to be called to carry your cross and follow after Him.

We see a clear example of this with Luther appealing to the Scriptures and then Standing firm on Christ. Yes, that is what you are called to do...to make the Stand for Christ.

As we are called Children of God. As Jesus proclaims that He is the Christ, Crucified and Risen from the dead...and even points back to the Scripture. We are called to do the same.

The author to the Hebrews encourages us all the more to hold fast to the confession of our hope as he writes:

## English Standard Version Chapter 10

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

At the Diet of Worms Luther held fast to the confession of his hope without wavering. He refused to be moved from his teaching except by the Holy Scriptures' correction...because in the Scripture we hear the voice and promise of Christ Himself—He who promised, who alone is trustworthy. The Scriptures are that trustworthy testimony of God to us, a promise that brings God with His benefits to us.

This is why we too stand on Christ and His Word. It is through His Word that we learn and know the truth. It is through His Word that we receive His promise! It is through His Word that we receive the forgiveness of sins. It is through His Word that He creates faith, gives us the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which is the medicine of immortality.

I pray that you and I when called upon to take a stand for our faith, that we can as Luther says:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scriptures or by clear reason I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen.”

We stand on Christ Crucified and Risen, may God help us! We stand in Christ who gave his life for us so that we have the ability to stand, and are called Children of God. So yes, it is on the Solid Ground, the Word of God, which proclaims the mystery of the Word made flesh, and crucified and Risen from the dead, that I stand.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.