

**Presentation of the Augsburg Confession–Matt 10:32-39
Minor Festival**

**Sermon
June 25, 2017**

Dear Heirs of the Lutheran Reformation,

You heard the background to the presentation of the Augsburg Confession. Now you need to hear what happened next at Augsburg.

1) When the Lutheran princes arrived at the city, Emperor Charles and his brother, Ferdinand King of Austria, demanded that there be no Lutheran preaching in the city. They also demanded that the Lutheran princes attend a festival Mass, which was an important Catholic worship service with them the next day. The princes replied that they would rather have their heads cut off than follow these orders. The Emperor backed down and assured them that no one would lose their heads.

2) At this time they also they found out that John Eck, Luther's nemesis, had written lengthy attack on Luther and associated him with the most radical of the reformers, the Ana-Baptists. These people denied some of the basic teachings of the Bible. The princes and their pastors had to put away their prepared statements and write a defense Luther and the teachings of the Reformation which were the teachings of the Bible. On June 25, 1530 this new document, the Augsburg Confession, was presented to the Emperor.

What happened at Augsburg is important for you and me. It shows that what Jesus said in Mathew 10, the gospel reading, continued after the first century. Today there are vicious attacks on those who proclaim the gospel faithfully. With the words of the Jesus and the example of the Lutheran princes, we are encouraged to **Confess Christ Faithfully**.

1. Because of Christ acknowledges you.

The first reason you have for confessing Christ is because he acknowledges you.

A. What the Lutheran princes understood was that they had a valuable treasure in the free gift of salvation in Christ.

One of the things that the Lutherans and Catholics agreed on was the people are sinners. God is a holy Judge and when we are born we are unholy. Both groups agreed that grace was necessary. How that grace works is where the difference appears. The Roman Catholics and Emperor Charles believed that you receive grace at your Baptism and that is enough to get the "ball rolling". After your Baptism you have to work for salvation by doing good works and

doing penance when you sinned.

The Lutherans looked at the Scriptures which say that we are spiritually dead and incapable of any works that earn salvation. In St. Paul's letter to the Romans, Martin Luther found the words, **"For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."** (Romans 3:23)

That faith that justifies, or declares us innocent, is focused on Jesus. We look to the innocent Son of God hanging on the cross and we see God's justice completely satisfied. In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the Lord doesn't just give you "a good start" at salvation. He gives you salvation! He acknowledges you as his own child.

As we stand with the apostles and the Lutheran princes we have this promise from the book of Revelation: **The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.** (3:5)

B. Spiritually and Scripturally the stand of the Lutheran princes was easy. Scripture was clear. However, emotionally and psychologically their stand was another matter. If you have ever had a sharp disagreement about the Bible with someone you care about, you know what I am talking about. It can be gut wrenching. The Lutheran princes like Martin Luther went through some gut wrenching experiences.

Jesus knew there would be moments like this. So he also issues a warning. **"But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven."** (33) Jesus knew that Satan is going to tempt us to deny him and take what seems to be the "easy" road. However, Jesus warns us that denying him, means he will deny us before his Father in heaven. A person can say, "I went to church my whole life." However, it won't matter. Disowning Jesus means being disowned and losing out on the treasure of salvation. This is why the Lutheran princes did not disown Jesus before kings and the assembly of the German states. This is why we don't want to do so either.

2. Because Christ warns you of opposition.

Jesus goes on and explains why the disciples will be tempted to disown him. There will be opposition.

A. **"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."** (34)

1. This sounds confusing if you know a little bit of Scripture. Isaiah calls the Savior to be born the **“Prince of Peace.”** (Isa 9) Jesus now says he didn’t come to bring peace, but a sword. How do we understand what seems to be a contradiction.

Remember the Lord promised a Savior after Adam and Eve sinned. (Gen 3) The peace that God promised was peace through the forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness would come through the promised Savior. Everyone who repents of their sins and looks to Christ and his cross has forgiveness of sins and eternal life. However, rebellious human nature hears the word “peace” and desires peace and quiet while it does things its way. We have many sinful desires, but the worst is craving to make ourselves like God through good works. Human nature says, “Don’t bother me with calls to repentance. Don’t bother me with the thundering of God’s law. I believe that I am good enough to work out my own salvation.” However, God’s word clearly confesses that our good works are not enough. Salvation is through Christ alone. The world’s reaction is to bristle and rant and fight.

2. For this clear confession they tried to kill Luther. A few years after Augsburg they succeeded in killing some of the Lutheran princes. Today there are places in the world where people are dying for clearly confessing Christ. It is getting harder and harder in our own country to make that confession without some consequences.

B. Jesus tells us specifically that divisions will happen down to the family unit. Father and son will be divided. Mother and daughter will be divided, etc. A man’s enemies will be members of his own household.

3. Because Christ gives life everlasting.

Jesus points his disciples in the right direction and gives them hope. He promises that as they follow him they will have the life God has given.

A. Jesus frames his encouragement in a series of negatives.

1. The first encouragement is to love him. They are to love him more than family. This reflect the thought behind the 1st Commandment that we are to love God above all else. Why wouldn’t we? He has given us life and salvation.

2. Therefore we are to take up our cross and follow him. Not everyone loves God or puts him first. Not everyone follows Jesus. They will object to us doing so, they may even make us suffer, but Jesus encourages us that this is the right thing to do.

3. When Jesus uses the word “worthy” he does not mean that we are earning salvation. It is a gift. “Worthy” means that the Lord has declared us righteous, but if we reject him, he will remove that label of righteous that he has given.

B. So we take up our cross and follow Jesus. Jesus says we will find that we aren’t losing life, but we will find we have it forever in him.

The Lutheran princes were wealthy and powerful men. The emperor could have tried to have their heads cut off for treason. They confessed they would rather have their heads cut off than deny Christ. They understood that this life is short and imperfect and life in heaven is perfect and forever. They knew the treasure of salvation and would not give it up.

Application: If you or I had an Augsburg moment, what would it be like? It is an interesting question. Remember that there are only two religious trains of thought in the world: One is *“I must do something to make myself right with God.”*, the other is *“God has done something to make me right with him. He sent Jesus to save me.”* If we end up in an Augsburg moment, you will be pressured to accept the belief that people can make themselves right with God.

What is your response? Jesus says that we are to confess him as the one and only Savior. We are not alone. We stand not only with the Lutherans of old, but we stand with the Apostles and Prophets and with Jesus himself. After all this is what the Scriptures confess. In doing this we are confessing Christ faithfully.

Conclusion: I hope you understand the reason for celebrating this Minor Festival. We need to remember that there was more than Dr. Luther nailing his 95 Thesis to the Castle Church door.

The Presentation of the Augsburg Confession is a reminder that we must and we can confess Christ faithfully. It is what the Jesus’ apostles did. It is what the Lutheran princes and clergy did in 1530. They fulfilled the words of Psalm 119:46, **“I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame.”** (ESV) We may not have the opportunity to speak before a king, but we stand firm in our faith and we confess today to all who will listen. Amen.