

“SO IF THE SON SETS YOU FREE, YOU WILL BE FREE INDEED.”

A hero is someone that we admire for their achievements and qualities. As the World Series gets underway; we remember Jackie Robinson not only as an outstanding baseball player, but for facing racism in all its ugliness. We admire Mala Yousafzai a young Pakistani who advocated for girls to have the right to attend school and be educated when the Taliban had banned girls from attending school. At the age of 14, she and two other girls were shot by Taliban gunman in an attempt to kill her for activism. Even though she was shot in the head, she recovered and continues being a strong voice for girls' education.

Whenever I think of a hero, I immediately think of our veterans and members of our armed forces; our police and firefighters who put themselves in harm's way so that we can live quiet and peaceful lives, and go to baseball games, and little boys and little girls can go to school.

Several years ago, there was a pop song that had the line, "We don't need another hero." There is truly one place that we don't need another hero -- where we put our faith, trust, and hope for everlasting life in heaven. There is nothing wrong with having heroes, but in the Christian faith and life, WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO, WE HAVE JESUS CHRIST.

Dear Friends in Christ, this is the great truth of the Reformation. The devil had twisted the message of the Church so that people's consciences were held in bondage and terror. The people were told that Jesus Christ was not enough; they needed other "heroes" to gain eternal life. God, in His grace, raised up His servant the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther to restore this

great truth to His Church.

This is the point of our Gospel lesson. Jesus is teaching us that we have Him, so we don't need another hero. Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, *"If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

The Jews talking with Jesus in our lesson could not believe the words of Jesus. *"We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone,"* the boasted. They were telling Jesus that they were already free. They didn't need a hero to free them. They were thinking in terms of slavery to an earthly master. Jesus was talking about slavery to sin, death, and hell.

Jesus response to them teaches us the truth of all human beings, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."* By our very natures, we are slaves. This is why we confess, "we are by nature sinful and unclean."

I. We cannot help but sin because our hearts are evil and against God. When we sin, we are showing our true nature. We are not good people. Sin holds us captive. It is our master. With our thoughts, words, and deeds, we show that sin is our master.

God will not share with idols the love and honor we owe Him. God promises that all who sin will be punished with death and damnation. *The wages of sin is death*, the Bible says (Ro 6:23).

The Good News of the Gospel is that we don't need another hero because Jesus Christ has set us free. Paul writes in our Epistle lesson,

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in [God's] sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe

(Ro 3:20-22).

II. Only Christ gives freedom from sin, death, and hell. Forgiveness is not something that we earn or deserve. It is not a reward from God for our great deeds. **Forgiveness for our sins comes only through the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ.**

God, in His love, did not want death and hell for us. He created us so that we would live with Him for eternity. So, God He sent His only-begotten Son and chose to punish Him so that you would be forgiven. All the sin of the world was laid on Jesus and He was condemned by the Father for the sin of every sinner. He was nailed to the cross, pierced by the spear, and then gave up His soul in death, the death that your sin demanded. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, paid the price for your sin with His innocent life, and that means we are forgiven all of our sins.

Before He died, He triumphantly cried, *"IT IS FINISHED!"* How sweet those words sound in our trembling, fear-filled ears! The bondage of sin, death, and hell upon us is over. We have been set free in Jesus! **We don't need another hero.**

III. *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* Jesus won the victory over sin, death, and hell and He freely gives us His victory so that it may be our very own. This is why Jesus Christ established His Church on this earth. The Church was to safeguard and preach and proclaim the message of freedom and victory that is ours in Jesus.

So I ask you: Why is Concordia {Zion} here? Why does this church exist? Better yet, why are you here? If we just need a place to meet others, we can go to the coffee shop. If we want to have fun, we can sit home and watch football games. Let us not be mistaken about this, **the Church exists to distribute the victory Jesus Christ won on the Cross**

of Calvary. The Church exists to give you the forgiveness of sins that Christ won for you on the cross.

The eternal message of the Church is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is why Christ established His Church here for us on this earth. And Christ said this about His Church: *“On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Mt 16:18).”* God knew that the devil would do everything he could possibly think of to destroy the Church. The devil wants nothing more than to **silence** the message that our sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ. The devil wants you to think that you must have any number of heroes for forgiveness and eternal life. Unfortunately, this was the message of the church of Luther's day. They told poor, frightened sinners to trust in any number of heroes. But, these do not give freedom.

This truth Luther learned through his own study of the Scriptures. The more He studied the Bible, the more he learned the truth: We don't need another hero, we have Jesus Christ. And he also knew that this was **not** the message the Church was preaching. So, Luther nailed his 95 Protests on the door of the Church in Wittenberg on the eve of All Saints' Day. The 95 Protests of the Rev. Dr. Luther did one thing -- it put the message of the Church squarely back on the Bible.

Martin Luther truly walked in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Luther was hated, not because he wanted to rule Christ's Church or he wanted wealth, but for exactly the same reason Jesus was hated and rejected -- he spoke the truth. He told people that we don't need another hero, we have Jesus Christ.

What of us today? We live in a restless age. It is not secret that our church pews are empty and people have little time or desire to hear and learn God's Word. We are tempted to react in despair, to even withdraw

from the world and our neighbors. That temptation is so great that we find ourselves fearing people, more than fearing God. Loving what people think of us more than loving God. Trusting in earthly things more than in Jesus.

My Friends, this world needs the freedom from the slavery of sin that only Jesus gives. When our forefathers formed the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, they boldly proclaimed Jesus and Him crucified for the salvation of the world. They chose to stand upon the Bible, to walk in the footsteps of Martin Luther, the footsteps of Christ Himself. We have the greatest treasure in all of heaven and earth to offer -- the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus the Christ. This is the message that frees from sin, death, and hell. Without it, souls remain in slavery.

We don't need another hero. We have Jesus Christ. May God preserve us so that this is the message we continually and always proclaim.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.