

White Ants – Sunday, October 28th 2012.

“And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.” ²¹ But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.” Luke 8:19-21

Beloved in the Lord,

A common enemy to a wooden framed house that is rarely found until the damage is done is the white ant or termite. The white ants eat away at your home, very often without you even knowing about it. It is only when a wall or floor collapses that you see what has been going on. The damage doesn't occur overnight but slowly and steadily.

When we bought our home there was a termite problem. They had eaten away part of the floor and some railings. From the outside everything looked fine, but upon closer inspection of the railing, I found that I could poke my finger through what used to be solid railing. The inside had all been eaten away. It was important to exterminate the ants which thankfully we were able to do.

You may be wondering why I am talking about white ants in our Reformation Day service. The simple answer is because as it was in Luther's day, so today we have a problem in the Church. The white ants are gnawing away at the foundations and if Luther had not stood up for the truth then the situation would have been dire.

White ants are those who deny that God's Word is inerrant truth. They water down the Bible, they pick and choose which passages to believe and which ones to ignore. The salt is not salty and the lamp is not burning brightly, because compromise, a desire to be popular, to please people has clouded the truth. Compromise erodes the foundations and the Church is sinking into the world.

In Luther's day, the dominant Church in his region, The Roman Catholic Church had departed so far from the truth that indulgences were being sold to people. These were little slips of paper that they bought declaring forgiveness for their sins. People were taught that they could buy their way out of God's judgement. This was a lie from the very pit of hell, and it despised the cross of Jesus Christ, so dishonouring Almighty God. Luther was incensed by this and he took a stand for the truth, not worrying about the consequences of his actions. Even though the hierarchy tried to quieten him, shut him up, force him to recant, even to kill him, God protected him and blessed his obedience. God used him mightily to spread the Gospel truth that salvation is by faith alone, in Jesus alone, by grace alone.

The Church today is in the same sorry state if not worse than it was in Luther's time. The white ants have been very active, especially in the last few years, and the foundations are being eaten away.

I was shocked to learn last week that the Canadian Lutheran Church now officially condones same sex marriage, and also accepts homosexuality as a life style choice to be accepted by the Church.

This is completely contrary to God's Word. The white ants have been very active and that particular Church has departed from its sure foundations and lost its way. They justify their stance by saying that the Church is in continual need of reform, and that we live in changing times.

I agree with the first statement that the Church is in constant need of reform. The Church needs to be reforming itself in line with God's Word. We live in a dirty fallen world and can easily be tainted by sinful attitudes and practices. We must continually be renewing our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ and be obedient to His Word. It has never been and never will be the Churches role to run with the times.

The Bible clearly teaches: ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."***
Hebrews 13:8

Jesus does not change, The Bible does not change. Society and people's opinions and values may change, but the Church is not to blow with the wind. The truth is the Truth and it does not adapt and change to please people's feelings or whims. It is not up to us to twist God's Word to make it palatable to sinful people. Our duty is to faithfully preach and teach God's Word as it is written.

God could use Martin Luther so powerfully, because he stood on God's Word. "Here I stand, I can do none other."

The pressure on us is increasing every day. We are being urged to water down the message, to lower the bar, to make it more palatable, acceptable, to compromise the truth. To that I reply with the words of the great Apostle Paul to the Galatians (1:10):

"For am I now seeking the favour of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

If all of our Pastor's made this their daily confession, then the white ants would be defeated and eradicated. Let us look closely at what Paul wrote preceding this confession:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;⁷ which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favour of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-10)

Do you see how seriously Paul takes this issue? I find it very interesting that the Canadian Lutheran Church acknowledges that even though their decision to accept same sex relationships could divide the Church and that it will cause disunity, it urges all to be united on the most basic confession: "Jesus is Lord." Unfortunately this again is deception. How can one confess that Jesus is Lord and not be subject to His Word? Jesus and God's Word are not separable. If we confess that Jesus is Lord, we submit to the Authority of His Word which is not open for private interpretation.

¹⁹ So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. ²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2.Peter 1:19-21)

This brings me to our text today. I think that the events described have a great relevance to my theme for today.

Jesus is in a home teaching and healing the sick. Many people have gathered and someone brings Him news that His mother and brothers are outside wanting to see Him. Jesus reaction is very interesting: **²¹ But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."**

In Matthews account we get an even clearer statement:

"While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷ Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." ⁴⁸ But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother." (Mt.12:46-50)

By saying this, Jesus is inferring that his brothers and His mother are not doing the will of The Heavenly Father at this time. This was the case. We know from the account in Marks Gospel, that Jesus family had arrived to try to stop Him, because like many they thought that He had lost His mind. We read in Mark 3:20-21

"And He *came home, and the crowd *gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. ²¹ When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."

Knowing this Jesus said that His mother and brothers are those that hear the Word of God and do it. Those that hear the Word of God and faithfully obey it, following God's Will.

This is a very important point. Not all who bear the name Christian are real Christians. Not all Churches that bear the name Evangelical Lutheran Church are true and faithful to God's Word and His Will. Sadly many are not. Many have departed from the foundational truths and departed from God's Word. No longer is it Sola Scriptura, but Scripture and men's thoughts and desires. No longer is it Sola Christus but Christ and whatever else you want to believe.

We may soon be at a cross roads and may already be there, and we will have to decide where we stand.

I personally wish to make it clear before you as your Pastor: **I stand on God's Word Alone.** As Joshua said a long time ago: ***"As for me and my house, we shall serve The Lord."***

As Luther said: Here I stand, I can do no other.

May the winds blow as they will, I believe that The Bible is The inerrant, immutable Word of God. It is the Truth. It is not to be added to or detracted from. It is not open to personal interpretation.

Today on Reformation Sunday I call upon all of us to renew our faith and commitment to God's Word.

Paul wrote:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:1-2

In order to remain faithful to the Truth, this renewing needs to be continuous. As we begin each day we should surrender ourselves, and present ourselves to Almighty God. Be continually renewed in our mind, so that we may know what is God's will, that which is good, acceptable and perfect.

I close with the words of Martin Luther:

"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.

Amen

Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.