



REFORMATION TALKING POINTS



REFORMATION
2017 It's *Still* All About
Jesus

LutheranReformation.org

1. WHY CELEBRATE LUTHER? I'VE HEARD HE SAID SOME THINGS EVEN LUTHERANS DON'T AGREE WITH.

Martin Luther, an intellectual giant with a strong personality, is not the true focus of the Reformation. The focus of the Reformation is God's love and action for humanity in His Son Jesus Christ. The question of the Reformation is how a person deals with their guilty conscience. Luther and the other Reformers taught that the solution comes from outside of a person, from what God did in His Son Jesus Christ. Luther proclaimed the crucified God as the center of real living.

2. LUTHER WROTE TERRIBLE THINGS AGAINST THE JEWS. WHY CELEBRATE AN ANTI-SEMITIC RACIST?

Martin Luther did write some very upsetting things against the Jewish people near the end of his life. The Lutheran church has repeatedly said that we do not follow nor agree with those statements. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod does not follow Luther's writings as doctrine or divinely inspired. Luther himself was inconsistent on his writings about Jewish people. He did write against them, but he also said that Christians should honor Jewish people and thank God for them. Lutherans believe that God loves everyone, all people, and that Jesus Christ died and rose for every single person — regardless of their nationality. Because God so loves the world, Christians are called to love, also.

3. WHY DO YOU CALL YOURSELVES LUTHERANS?

The name Lutherans is not primarily a reference to Martin Luther the man, but to his teachings about the truth of the Gospel. Luther reformed the Church by teaching the truth of Scripture. Luther taught that God saves people through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. This salvation is given by grace through faith and not by works. Luther taught what the early Church and the apostles taught in the New Testament. This return to the truth of God's Word is the cause and reason for celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Many of our congregations are named for saints. Yet, it is not the saints we worship, but the Christ whom they taught. The same is true for Luther. It is not the man we treasure, but the truth about Jesus that he proclaimed.

4. DID LUTHER LEAD TO HITLER?

No. Many people presume, based on charges William Shirer brought against Luther in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, that Luther taught the German people to never resist any government authority, even if it is corrupt. But this is not accurate. Luther taught that God rules in two different realms: the right-hand realm of the Church, in which God rules by grace through His Word and Sacraments; and the left-hand realm of society, in which God rules by human reason and force to curb evil and preserve order. Luther said that it is not God's will for the Church to try to rule in the left-hand realm, just as it is not His will for the government to mandate what the Church teaches. Luther did not, however, advocate unquestioned quietism. Toward the end of his life, Luther acknowledged that there are times when the secular authorities might be so corrupt that Christians must resist. Yet Luther said that this should never be violent, but always done in good order and according to law.

5. DIDN'T THE LUTHERANS AND THE CATHOLICS MEND THEIR DIFFERENCES OVER JUSTIFICATION?

This was Luther's desire (and the desire of the other Reformers). Sadly, the Catholic Church has yet to yield to the Scriptural teaching of justification by grace through faith for Christ's sake, without any merit, works or satisfactions on man's part. The recent pronouncements that this has taken place are sadly misleading. The Roman Catholic Church does not define faith or grace the same way the Scriptures do, and thus their agreement that people are saved by grace through faith is not a true agreement with what Lutherans mean when using the same words according to Scripture.

6. WHY DO YOU CELEBRATE A MAN WHEN YOU TEACH SCRIPTURE ALONE?

The Lutheran church does not celebrate Luther, but rejoices in the Scriptures as the only source for our doctrine and life. The Reformation taught that authority is found in the Scriptures and not in the clergy or councils of the Church. The Scriptures are God's inspired and inerrant Word, and therefore can be fully trusted and believed. God's Word is the only place we look for truth and revelation of God.

7. WHO CARES ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED 500 YEARS AGO? IS THIS STILL RELEVANT?

The central issue of the Reformation was humanity's place in existence. How do we exist before God and before each other? Is there truth? Is there meaning? Is there evil? Is there love? How can God exist if evil exists? These questions occupy conversations today, and were the exact questions that Luther and the other Reformers wrestled with. Sure, their context was different than ours today, but the questions and their answers are the same. The Reformation is about not figuring out God by your own speculative thoughts. The person who follows that path is already wrong. Don't look within but without, to the Scriptures where God makes promises. The Reformation teaches us to look to God in the Scriptures to answer our questions. The questions we ask about humanity are addressed in God's love in Christ. The questions about who God is are answered through Christ's death and resurrection. And there are also questions that we learn we cannot answer. We are taught to trust in the God who is love.

For more information about Luther, Lutherans and the Reformation, see lutheranreformation.org and lcms.org.



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