

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Consider the Lord's jarring Words to His disciples: "There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known." Frightening words indeed for men who would try to cover their sins. The Lord teaches that no sin, no transgression, no hypocrisy, no lie, no false statement, no misrepresentation, no exaggeration, will remain hidden. As they are all known by God now, so will they all be known.

For the sinner, for the one who would conceal his sin, for the one who would try to cover over his lust, his hatred, his jealousy, his covetousness, his pride or his falsehoods, for the one who would pretend that he lives a holy life and yet secretly harbors sinful thoughts and feelings, for such a man there is nowhere to hide.

God sees, and everything you have tried to conceal will be exposed. The façade of religiosity that you have built in an effort to mask your unholiness will be torn down. And that ought to strike real fear in every sinful heart, for with the revelation of unholiness comes eternal condemnation. And you must confess that you have sinned, and that you have tried to conceal inappropriate thoughts and desires.

The remedy for that unholiness, the remedy for darkness, the remedy for hidden transgression and the hypocritical life of a whitewashed tomb, is the clear proclamation of the Word of God. For that Word, God's Holy Word preached in its' purity, that Divine Word is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit. It is, that is God's Word is, the discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart, the discerner of the thoughts and the intents of your heart.

So the Lord directs His disciples to preach the Word they received from Him from the housetops, for that Word that illumines the darkness of this world. And as that swift sharp Sword of the Word cleaves, deceit is sundered from honesty, pride from humility, truth from lie, and evil from good. Which is to say, O Fallen Man, that it cleaves you.

The Holy Blade of the Law lays bare your hypocrisy and your falsehoods, your untruths and misrepresentations, your errors and your transgressions. The piercing point of the Ten Commandments peels back your best efforts to conceal your sinfulness, and shows you to be what all fallen men are: a sinner. And that never feels good. Some hear and repent, others are hardened in their false belief and sinful ways.

So the proclamation of the Truth, the Confession of the Word of God, divides. The preaching of the pure Word of God reveals falsehood. And so it was, 487 years ago today, that the greatest confession of the Christian faith ever written, the Augsburg Confession, presented by faithful Confessors willing to die for the Truth, brought the brilliant Light of Christ to expose the darkness and false doctrine of man-made religious systems.

Darkness hates the light, for in the light it cannot stand. So the Confessors were rejected and persecuted. Yet, by God's strong Word, in the light of the proper exposition of Holy Scripture, those who taught false doctrine were exposed, revealed as self-serving purveyors of a false religion.

But that same Confession, the Confession of salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, while exposing the darkness of false religion, brings the saving Light of the Gospel to the world. God's Word is powerful and active. Men hear the Scriptures. Men hear the Truth of God's Word. They see the errors they had previously held as true. And the Truth of the pure Gospel converts them, and brings them comfort, consolation, strength, forgiveness, salvation and life.

The Truth of the Gospel brings the confidence and comfort of Christ crucified and risen, the fact that God loves fallen men, the eternal Truth that He gave even His only Son as a perfect Sacrifice, a Once for All Sacrifice, that the sins of the world be forgiven. But more personally, what He did, He did for you, that your sins be forgiven, that you be reconciled to God.

The Augsburg Confession rightly proclaims the Scriptural Truth of the Triune God, the complete sinfulness of fallen man, the saving Truth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, your Savior. And it boldly confesses the Truth that you are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ alone. By that Confession you rightly know the Holy catholic Church and what She is – the Blood-bought Bride of Christ who gathers around the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments administered according to Christ's Institution.

And you, receiving these Saving Gifts, you are transformed, as God the Spirit works conversion and faith in you, and by the Scriptures and the Gifts of God to daily conform you to the example of Christ your Lord. Your works flow from faith, as by His Spirit you do the very things God leads you to do, the works that He has established for you to do. Those works, good works, please God. But they do not cause your salvation, rather they are a fruit of your salvation.

By God's grace the promise through the Prophet Jeremiah is fulfilled: He has caused you to know; He has caused you to know His Hand and His Might. You know that His Name is the Lord. You know by faith, for you have the Wisdom of Christ. He places a right faith in your heart, saving faith, and by that faith He brings forth from you a right confession of God.

And knowing, believing, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and the members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. In Him, in Christ alone, the Holy catholic, Apostolic Church is built together for a dwelling place of God the Spirit.

You no longer have the crushing, impossible burden of the false doctrine of salvation by works, and the nagging weight of your sins. All that is removed on the cross. All that is removed in the Font. Rather you have the joy, the Gospel freedom, the sure confidence of the fact that God declares you righteous for Christ's sake.

So it is you, dear Christian, whose very hairs are numbered by the God of Love. It is you, dear Christian, that are of great value to the God who created you, the God who redeemed you, the God who sanctifies you. Your value is shown in the price that He paid for you – the Blood of Christ, the very Blood He bids you drink this day.

You kneel at this rail, believing, and in the very act of receiving God's rich Mysteries, His Holy Gifts, you confess the Lord's death until He comes. No longer is evil hidden in you, for on the last day what will be revealed in you is Christ's righteousness. What will be made known of you is that you are God's purchased child, redeemed of Christ, filled with His Spirit, forgiven, restored, with a right confession of faith.

And as God has promised, you who rightly confess Christ on earth, the same Lord Christ confesses you before His Father who is in heaven.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.