

10/30/09

Lutheran Church of the Resurrection
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So, it's time to throw in my 2¢ worth. But I'd like to steer clear of the "major" theological discussion and focus on what I feel is a bigger issue. I / we have all read the various letters, sermons, websites, and discussions reacting to the ELCA social statements on "Human Sexuality". So far, the only thing that is clear to me is that Satan is winning. He's winning, not because of the statements and the ELCA "position", but because we are drawing dividing lines between us. We're looking to "split" or leave our congregations and synods. We're withholding our pledges and contributions and fighting out of fear, misunderstanding, and desperation to exert some kind of control over the situation.

I probably don't need to say this but... we the church, are a group of sinners; all of us; individually and possibly corporately. But holding one belief or another is not a sin. Sin is the act or acts that move us away from salvation. And salvation, from what I understand, is guaranteed through the gift of Jesus... once we accept Him as our savior, and what He came to do, "make all things new", our life will be fulfilled in Him by His grace.

Satan wins if we leave one group of sinners just to join another because of a particular "belief". Our power is diminished by the lessening of our combined insights, support, concerns, service, grace, & compassion we have for each other.

How should we respond? We need to work within the system to effect change. We need to use the events to motivate us and get **more** involved. To get more involved with our church, our synod, and our district.

If our government does something we don't like; health care bills, gay marriage laws, furlough days or whatever; can we withhold our tax dollars? Can we split off and startup a new state, local, or federal government? Sometimes we would like to do just that but our hope lies in getting more involved. In the case of the government, we need to vote for the candidates that reflect our beliefs, supporting them with our contributions, and, for better or worse, paying our fair share of taxes to keep the wheels turning. For our church and the ELCA – we need to get on council or a committee, support the areas of the ELCA & LCR that tug at our heart, and we need to tithe so that as church, we stay together and keep the wheels turning.

We may not ever agree on this "issue"... or a lot of issues, but we have to decide if we can make a difference by staying involved in the system. If we leave, we give up that chance and opportunity... and I believe we give up much more than that. By only surrounding ourselves with those who we agree with, we give up the chance to grow, to learn from differing perspectives, and to share what we do have in common. I believe Satan loses if we stay together as a church family and within the ELCA. Not because one is right and one is wrong, or one "needs" to be right or wrong, but because we are all in need of salvation and the belief of who's right or wrong does not help us gain salvation. Ultimately there is only one person you are responsible for "saving"... yourself. You can pray, preach, or cajole others all you want, but their salvation rests within themselves. If I am sinning and in need of salvation, I need to have

fellow sinners around working the same plan with me, but showing me his or her perspectives to help me on my journey. Without those insights and perspectives of those who might wish to leave, we lose a big part of what makes us stronger.

Personally, I believe in the people at LCR and the ELCA, all of them. They / we are not perfect and I may not agree with everything that is said by one side, or the other, but I feel **called** to stay and work within and use our mutual support to continue our Christian journey. I hope to learn from those around me and, God willing, use whatever I learn as a contribution to those I associate with.

The Body of Christ has some interesting parts and pieces. Some clean and some unclean parts... some down right disgusting, no part of it perfect. But without the whole body... it will never function as a complete body. We must learn to live within the body and work to get it in shape and stay fit. It bothers me that on **both** sides of the issue we are taking steps or actions that will separate us from each other, and that saddens me greatly.

My prayer is for God to give us the patience, insight, and spirit to live together, and in Him, someday we will be perfect.

I conclude with an excerpt from "*Reflections on the Bound Conscience in Lutheran Theology*"

It is one thing to say, "This is what I believe Scripture says about this issue." It is quite another to insist that others must adhere to our interpretation. When Christians differ over interpretations of Scripture, no one may simply arrogate to him or herself the authority to judge others but must always beware of "spirituality," presumption, and pontificating, that is "*enthusiasmus*," literally, worshiping the god within (*en theou*). Moreover, one cannot simply assume that someone else's position is merely a matter of stubbornness or pride. Instead, one must carefully discern where the neighbor's conscience is in relation to a particular interpretation of God's Word. Thus, pastoral concerns and protection for the weak or bound conscience must never be placed out of bounds in theological discussion, especially when dealing with matters of ethics and morality about which Christians fervently disagree.

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In Christ,



Franc Woods

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;"
Gal 2:20

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