

克利夫蘭華人教會

Cleveland Chinese Christian Church

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Youth Pastor Letter

October 2017

Dear Church Family,

The month of October marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation which began with a monk named Martin Luther. This monk had become enraged at the abuses of church power he had witnessed through the sale of indulgences.

The medieval Catholic church taught that while work of Jesus Christ on the cross removed the eternal punishment of sin, God also needed to be “paid back” over the course of a lifetime in order to be compensated for the dishonor he incurred as a result of sin in the life of the believer. If a person did not make satisfactory payment over the course of his life, he would be required to spend time in Purgatory – a “refining by fire,” as it were. This would have to be done before a person could enter into the paradise of Heaven.

Indulgences were a method by which Catholics could minimize or even eliminate the time they would spend in Purgatory. The church asked the people to contribute to their own salvation by purchasing indulgences for themselves and those already dead and in “purgatory.” This not only helped the church raise money for a building project, but also minimized the importance of the saving work of Christ and took advantage of countless people.

When Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Chapel on October 31st in 1517 in response to the sell of indulgences, he set into motion a movement of Christians that became known as the Protestant Reformation. Here is some of what Martin Luther wrote:

Thesis 33: “We must especially beware of those who say that those pardons of the pope are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to God.”

Thesis 79: “It is blasphemy to say that the cross adorned with the Papal arms is as effectual as the cross of Christ.”

From these words, a wonderful gospel truth was rediscovered. Man is saved not through what he does. He is saved by abandoning his futile attempts to save himself in favor of faith in Christ alone. This is a true message that we must hold dear. God’s people are not saved through their actions, but through the perfection of Christ in whom they place their faith. This message combines the truths that human efforts and action are both insufficient and unnecessary for our eternal right-standing. We are so sinful that we could never save ourselves. And we don’t have to, because Christ has done every work necessary for our salvation.

Christ has already accomplished every work which we ourselves would attempt as a means of self-justification. Instead of continuing our futile efforts to provide right-standing to ourselves, we may live for the One who has already accomplished it all.

As always, if you have any questions, comments, or prayer requests, please contact me at jmlilley@clevelandccc.org.

In Christ,
Pastor Jonathan Lilley