



The Lutheran Church: A Church Born of Joy

As children of the Reformation, we, of all Christians believe, teach and confess that the Church passes through periods of decline, repentance and renewal. It has and will always be the pattern until Christ's Second Coming.

In Old Testament Israel, King Hezekiah (ca. 700 B.C.) followed the wicked and adulterous reign of Ahaz, who the Bible tells us “did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 28:1). Hezekiah, with great haste, immediately worked to rid the Temple of pagan practices. He restored Temple worship. When the masses came to Jerusalem in preparation of the Passover, the Bible tells us that they “set to work and removed the (pagan) altars that were in Jerusalem, and the altars for burning incense they took away and threw into the brook Kidron (2 Chronicles 30:14). Next, Scripture tells us that they slaughtered the great Passover lamb that pointed to the coming Savior. This act of repentance, on behalf of the laity, had a profound effect upon the clergy. They repented! The Bible tells us, “The priests and Levites were ashamed, so that they consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings into the house of the LORD (2 Chronicles 30:15).

Scripture then informs us that the repentant worshippers decided to keep the feast for an additional seven days “**WITH GREAT GLADNESS**” (30:21). This repentance and restoration brought jubilation. “So there was **GREAT JOY** in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. Then the priest and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to His holy habitation in heaven (2 Chronicles 30:26-27).

The Reformation was, above all, a rediscovery of the Word of the LORD, with the same results as ancient Israel. It brought **JOY!** The Word of God had been “lost.” The “Temple” had become a place where human opinion reigned. Salvation was peddled for a price.

Convinced things were not as God instituted and intended, Martin Luther walked over to the Castle Church of Wittenberg and posted his 95 Theses. The first of his 95 Theses reads, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says, ‘Repent,’ He wills that the entire life of the Christian be one of repentance.” Rediscovery of and rededication to the Word of God always brings repentance and repentance leads to **JOY**.

Martin Luther came to see what he called a “**joy-ful exchange**” – Christ Jesus takes our sin, our death and hell; and we, by faith alone, receive His birth, life, perfect faith, good works, crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension and eternal life! The full Biblical witness convinced Luther of his right relationship with God for the sake of Jesus. And that filled him with an abiding, unconquerable **JOY: Joy-Fully Lutheran**. May that same **JOY** be yours as we continue to celebrate what God has done for us over the past 160 years – bringing Jesus to us and as we look forward with **JOY** to the day we will be brought to Him in the life everlasting.

Reformation **JOY!**

Pastor Szczesny