

Sermon #1,152: Psalm 119:46 (*Historic Introit*)

6-28-15 (Festival of the Augsburg Confession), Bethany-Princeton MN

Hymns: 79, 427, 584

“I WILL SPEAK, AND WILL NOT BE ASHAMED”

**The Text, Psalm 119:46. I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings,
And will not be ashamed.**

Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. May Your Word of truth lead us on the Way of truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ: Grace to you, and peace, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

What a week to join together in confessing the one true faith. We are living in a time of confession. This past week the U.S. Supreme Court came down with two decisions that make practicing the Christian faith more difficult.

First, they upheld the health care law. Now, you might wonder what that has to do with Christianity; but included in that legislation is increased funding for abortion. Against your will, your taxes may be used by the culture of death to advance its agenda. Second was the decision that makes same-sex marriage a constitutional right. Citizens and state governments are not allowed to restrict it. The nation’s solicitor general has said that churches or schools that speak against same-sex marriage might lose tax-exempt status. It is only a matter of time before churches like ours that refuse to perform same-sex marriages will face all kinds of pressure. More and more we Christians will face the prospect of temporal losses as a consequence of confessing the faith.

So it is a good time for us to read from the Augsburg Confession. It is not that the Augsburg Confession addresses these specific issues. But these issues are connected to the historic Christian faith that the Augsburg Confession expresses. And especially what resonates is how they did not shrink from publicly confessing the faith, despite so much earthly power arrayed against them.

At 3 o’clock on June 25, 1530, a layman named Christian Beyer stepped before the most powerful man in the world, Emperor Charles V, and began to read. At the very end of the introductory comments, he read in a loud voice: *“This is our confession and that of our people, article by article, as follows.”* When he finished reading almost 2 hours later, another Lutheran layman placed two copies of the Augsburg Confession into the emperor’s hands.

Printed at the beginning of the Augsburg Confession is a Bible verse, Psalm 119:46: “I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.” Let me start at the end:

“And will not be ashamed.” In the psalms this phrase “will not be ashamed” means “will not be put to shame.” It looks ahead to when you stand before God. Remember how Adam and Eve felt standing before God after the fall into sin? They were ashamed. Being put to shame is what God has to do to people due to their sins. But if you “will not be put to shame” it’s because Jesus has taken your sins away. He did this for everyone. If you “will not be put to shame,” it’s because you have faith in Jesus that saves you from your sins.

The Bible says, *“With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Ro 10:10).* Jesus said, *“Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father in heaven” (Mt 10:32-33).*

So having the faith of the Bible is something you confess. You can’t have faith and not confess it somehow. The first part of this verse from the psalms says, **“I will speak of Your testimonies before kings.”** The psalms, the Bible, and Jesus Himself declare this is part of the essence of a Christian – speaking this faith in front of others.

The important part is the phrase **“Your testimonies.”** It means: the things the Bible says. By putting this verse on the front of the Augsburg Confession, those who wrote it were saying what our confession is. It’s only filled with “God’s testimonies.” It isn’t in competition with the Bible. All it does is say what the Bible teaches. We are saying we have the faith of the Bible too. We join with the Lutherans of 485 years ago to say: **“I will speak”** this faith!

We aren’t speaking in front of a powerful king with our lives on the line. But the events of this week reminds us that if we are Christians we can’t escape persecution. We know many people around the world face violent death for their faith from terrorists. In some cases today, terrorists are more powerful than the constituted government, they are the real power, the true ruler. In a lawless society that’s how it is. Of course you never know when something like this will come to our country. But even if terrorists don’t, our own government just may keep doing what is happening right now: removing the ability of Christians to confess Christ and His truth without adverse consequences.

By reading “our confession” today, the Augsburg Confession, we are reminded what specifically the one holy Christian faith is that we confess. Someday we may have to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it. But we will not be put to shame. Amen!