

We can be thankful for the reforms Martin Luther worked during his lifetime. However, if we're honest, we need to be aware that Luther was able to accomplish as much as he did because he had friends in high places who kept him safe. After the Diet of Worms, his friends kidnapped him and kept him in protective custody at Wartburg Castle. He was able to do some of his best writing there, translating the New Testament into German, for example. After he came out of hiding, princes and rulers kept him safe from the violence of his opponents.

What would it be like if Luther didn't have those friends in government to keep him safe? We don't need to wonder what that would have been like because we have Jan Hus. We may know him as John Huss as that's his English name. Jan Hus was born in the late 1300s in the Bohemian town of Husinec, essentially named Goosetown. In fact, the last name Hus means Goose. Bohemia is modern day Czech Republic. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415 being charged a heretic. Jan Hus is a precursor to Martin Luther and in fact, many of the ideas and concerns Jan Hus had Luther echoed in his writings.

Jan Hus supposedly predicted that Martin Luther would come. The report has it that as Jan was about to die he said, "They will roast a goose now, but after a hundred years they will hear a swan sing, and him they will have to endure"

Jan Hus fought for many of the same things Luther fought for: Hus preached in the language of the people and drew large crowds of those who could actually understand the Gospel, Hus railed against the sale of indulgences and the corruption of the church. Hus also had a time of exile when he wrote his most famous works. We can see many similarities between Hus and Luther.

As we consider our sermon series, in our first part we are focusing on Revelation 7 wherein John the evangelist sees the heavenly vision, "**After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,**" Two weeks ago, we discussed the church of all nations. Hugo Hahn fought for the Church that consists of all nations, including ethnic Jews. Gudina Tumsa fought for the Church that consists of all tribes. He sought to have churches cooperate across the many people groups of Ethiopia, and taught that there's something greater than the country of Ethiopia.

Hus fought for the Church of all people. That's not to say that all people are going to heaven, but it is to say that the church is not just the Pope, not just the cardinals, bishops, and leadership. The Church is not the structure of leaders who trace their ordination back to Peter. The Church is made up of all believers. That is what Hus is commemorated for.

As we discussed last week, Revelation 13 pictures two beasts, and the first beast represents earthly authority run amok to destroy God's people the Church.

We see this first beast in the likes of the power of Nazism in Germany and Communism in Ethiopia under the Derg regime. Satan works through the first beast to attack the church from the outside.

But in Revelation 13, a second beast arises, and that is the forces of Satan which seek to destroy to the Church from within. We see this in Hus, we see this in Luther, we will see this with Tyndale in two weeks. The beast from within the church seeks to silence the Gospel.

Jan Hus was in a predicament. Who will watch the watchmen? What happens when you can't trust the hierarchy? Jan Hus was flabbergasted that the Church was not listening to his concerns and his corrections. He eventually ended up appealing to Christ because the pope wouldn't listen to him. He was excommunicated by the Church and rejected by it.

What are some things we learn from Hus? What are some teachable moments we have that Hus can bring us? We'll talk about it in terms of three things and touch on our three appointed readings that are appointed for today. First, let's talk about the Gospel reading where Jesus talks to the disciples about our place in the kingdom. Jesus said, **"It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

Lay leaders in the church, pastors, circuit visitors, district presidents, synodical officials, and district presidents—all of these Christ has placed in the church to serve. Yes, there is a hierarchy, and that's not wrong. I respect my district president. I respect synod president. They are due all the honor of the position, but all of us leaders are those under the authority of Christ, and when we step out of that authority, we risk punishment and being even being removed from that position of authority.

The leaders of the church in Hus' time are best described by Isaiah's words in Isaiah 56 **"His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all."** There were two popes because the church couldn't figure out which one was the legitimate one. Priests were sleeping with prostitutes, and all sorts of other gross indecencies were being committed. Something needed to change. There needed to be whistleblowers.

Jesus' faithfulness ultimately led to his death. From the cross, **"Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."** Jesus forgave His persecutors, and He forgives us for our faithlessness. He invites us to follow Him in life and in death. Hus modeled a Christ-like life as he too died at the hand of

persecutors and his last words were purported to be “Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee to have mercy on my enemies.” His death certainly wasn’t salvific like Jesus’, but may we model that boldness and faithfulness in the Gospel.

Second, our Epistle reading tells us what the role of leadership is in the church, “**to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,**” The Church is the church of all people, and leaders exist to give each Christian the tools to carry out the ministry in their own churches and in their various daily callings.

Hus broke the mold by preaching in Czech, and he drew thousands of people to hear the Gospel preached in their own language. Remember, otherwise, the service was in Latin, a language completely unknown to the common people. At the heading of each section of Luther’s Small Catechism is the inscription “as the head of the household should teach it.” Religious instruction was never something to be farmed out to the church, but the church was meant to instruct parents, especially fathers, who then taught the faith in the home.

We want to be a congregation that can partner with you in ministry. We’re not simply providers and you’re consumers like we might consider our favorite restaurants, television shows, or other entertainment. Help us help you partner in ministry.

Third, the Lord speaks to us in Isaiah 56, “**The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”**” Heaven will be a surprise. There will be the kinds of people who we expected to be there who aren’t there, and there will be kinds of people who we never thought would be there who *are* there.

An early church father was supposed to have said, “The road to Hell is paved with the bones of priests and monks, and the skulls of bishops are the lamp posts that light the path.” Whether or not he said it, we do know James wrote, “**Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.**” Perhaps many priests in Hus’ day, maybe even some Popes, may not end up in heaven. In the same vein, not everyone whose name is on the membership rolls of a church are guaranteed to have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life.

On the other hand, when we understand, like Hus did, that salvation is apart from anything you’ve done and out of grace for everything Christ has done, that opens the possibility for people we’d never expect to be with us in heaven. “**Jesus said to [the chief priests and elders of the people], “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.**” Nobody is too good that they don’t need Jesus, and nobody is so bad that they can be saved by Him. May we boldly share our faith with all, knowing that Christ is for all!