



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

**An Introduction to Lutheran Doctrine
and the Church of the Lutheran Confession
Lesson 1 – Our Purpose**

Introduction

The organizing convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) took place in August of 1960. The name was chosen in order to indicate that this church body did not intend to teach anything new or different, but was determined to be a confessional Lutheran church. Today there are many Lutheran church groups all over the world, but most of them are not truly Lutheran in what they teach or practice. They are Lutheran in name only. A truly Lutheran church body not only formally subscribes to the collection of Lutheran confessions known as the *Book of Concord* (1580), but also strives to put this teaching into practice in all of its congregations and schools.

The CLC wants to follow the procedure stated in the Preface to the *Book of Concord*: “Our disposition and intention have always been directed toward this, that in our lands, territories, schools, and churches no other teaching be permitted than that alone which is based upon the holy, divine Scripture and is embodied, treated, and advanced in the *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology*” (BC, p. 13).

Lutheran doctrine is the doctrine that comes from the Scriptures, that is from the canonical books of the Old Testament and the New Testament. If the doctrine does not come from the Bible, it is not Lutheran doctrine. Therefore, there can truly be no difference between Bible doctrine and Lutheran doctrine.

Martin Luther lived from 1483 to 1546 in Germany. His enemies gave the name Lutheran those who agreed with his doctrine as a term of derision. The Lutherans preferred to be called simply Christians. In order to distinguish themselves from others, they called themselves the Church of the *Augsburg Confession*, which was adopted in 1530 as a basic statement of what Martin Luther taught from the Bible. Confessional Lutherans today believe that Martin Luther was God’s gift to His people to bring them back to true Bible teachings after many years during which the true teaching had been neglected. The Preface to the *Book of Concord* states: “In these last days of this transitory world the Almighty God, out of immeasurable love, grace, and mercy for the human race, has allowed the light of his holy gospel and his Word that alone grants salvation to appear and shine forth purely, unalloyed and unadulterated out of the superstitious, papistic darkness for the German nation, our beloved fatherland” (p. 5).

The lessons in this Introduction to Lutheran Doctrine and the Church of the Lutheran Confession are based on the CLC’s Statement of Faith and Purpose. The text of this document will appear in a box at the beginning of each section. Comments are added after each section to help you better understand our Statement of Faith and Purpose.

Please answers the questions in each lesson in your own words and give complete answers. If you have any questions about the content or the questions you are to answer, please ask instructor.

May God bless this study of His saving word and may He use it to bring us to a unity of faith that is truly pleasing to Him!

CLC Statement of Faith and Purpose – Foreword to the Fourth Edition

The 1968 Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession asked that a statement be prepared and published that would supply a simple but definitive expression of our faith in the basic doctrines of Scripture.

The Statement of Faith and Purpose was published in 1969. It has served well as a public confession of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and experience has shown that it has spoken to the hearts of readers in an inspirational rather than dogmatic fashion.

The Statement of Faith and Purpose was written to present what the Bible says and what we believe and teach regarding the issues of the day. While our confessional position remains unchanged, there was an effort in this 4th edition to speak simply and clearly to a world that desperately needs to hear the word of life from Jesus.

I. Our Purpose

It is our single purpose to be a Christian church that proclaims the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. This Gospel is the only way people can know the true God and the way to eternal life. Our purpose and commitment rest upon the following statements of the Bible:

Matthew 28:18-20: And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

John 17:3: And this is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Acts 4:12: Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Comments:

It is always important to know the context of a passage. For example, Jesus said Matthew 28:18-20 during the forty-day period between His resurrection from the dead and His ascension to heaven. He had completed His mission of living and dying in order to redeem mankind. His resurrection from the dead proved that His mission was a success. At a designated time and place, Jesus gathered His followers at a mountain in Galilee and gave them their marching orders.

As the Son of God, Jesus always had all authority on heaven and earth. But now this authority has been given to Him also as a man, because He completed His assignment of saving the world. In His authority He is now telling His followers what they are to do during the time that remains before He returns on the last day as the Judge of the living and the dead. Their assignment as disciples or followers is to make others His disciples by baptizing them in the name of the true God: the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and by teaching them all the things that Jesus taught them. This is our great commission as Christians, for it is clear that this task is to continue as long as the world endures. Jesus promises to be with us as we carry out this work.

Around the same time, Jesus said: **"Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15). The Gospel is the Good News of what Jesus has done for our salvation. That is why we call it "the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ." The apostle Paul summarized the Gospel in these words: **"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried, and...He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures"** (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

John 17:3 is a small portion of the prayer Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father on the night of His arrest. Notice that the true God who gives eternal life is the God who sent Jesus into the world as the Christ, the promised Messiah. Notice also that the hope for eternal life is based on our knowledge of the true God and Jesus, whom the Father sent into the world to be our Savior.

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, spoke the words in Acts 4:12 shortly after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. He and John were imprisoned by the Jewish authorities because they were openly teaching the Jewish people that Jesus had risen from the dead. Their message was confirmed by the miracle they had just performed in Jesus' name: the healing of a crippled beggar at the gate of the Temple. When Peter was asked by what authority he and John had healed the beggar, Peter responded by directing their attention to Jesus as the only Savior of the entire human race.

This truth should make us realize the extreme importance of bringing the good news of salvation in Jesus to as many people as we possibly can. The religion of Jesus or Christianity is the only religion in the entire world that can save anyone and give him or her eternal life. Our church body therefore must have the teaching and spreading of this good news of Jesus as its main task. In fact, every other task that we carry out must support this main task, or else it is not a task for our church or any other Christian church to be involved in.

I. Our Purpose (continuation)

We reject the idea of some that the main work of the church is to promote political and social causes. Our right of existence as a church body has been established by our Lord's commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15). Therefore we are committed to say with the Apostle Paul: "*I am determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2). As individuals, Christians will show fruits of their faith by concern for social and political issues, letting their light shine before others to the glory of God.

1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Matthew 5: 13-16: You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Comments:

As a church body our work centers on the preaching of the Gospel. This is our full-time assignment. As a church body, we are not called to get involved in matters of social justice or political parties. Of course, the preaching of the Gospel in accordance with God's Word makes it necessary for the church to preach God's Law boldly. We must denounce that which is contrary to God's Word without fear or favor, like John the Baptist denounced the adultery of Herod Antipas and Paul spoke about the judgment to come to Governor Felix. But Paul did not begin a campaign to do away with slavery in the Roman Empire nor did he organize any kind of rebellion against the decrees of Emperor Nero.

Individual Christians, however, have a dual citizenship. On the one hand, they are God's chosen and special people called to proclaim the praises of their saving God in word and deed. On the other hand, they are also citizens of their country. They have various duties according to their station in life, whether fathers or mothers or government officials or employers or employees. Citizens have a duty to obey the laws of the land. They also have certain rights and privileges in certain countries to participate in social and political causes, such as voting and supporting certain candidates over other candidates, etc. These rights vary from one country and culture to another. In all situations and in all circumstances, however, we should not hide our faith in Jesus Christ or our allegiance to Him. We should confess our faith by what we say and what we do. This is taught by 1 Peter 2:9 and Matthew 5:13-16, which a portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount addressed to His followers.

Questions

1. Why did the CLC publish its Statement of Faith and Purpose?
2. What is the purpose of the CLC?
3. What should be the purpose of every Christian church body?
4. What is the Gospel that the church is to preach?
5. When and where did Jesus give His disciples the great commission?
6. What are the two ways by which we make disciples?
7. What words of Jesus teach that there is only one true God?
8. How can we know which God is the true God?
9. Why can we be sure there is only one way to salvation and eternal life?
10. What is the only way to eternal life?
11. What does it mean that a Christian has dual citizenship?
12. How do Christians glorify their God in their daily lives?