



“Be Ready to confess” 2 Timothy 4:1-4  
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2017 is really a rather amazing year. First off, of course, it is the 500th anniversary of Luther’s posting of the 95 Theses. The whole world is paying attention to Luther this year. In fact, it seems like 2017 is all Luther all the time—24/7/365! But there is even more to 2017. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, our LWML, which has done so much to encourage and support the sharing of Christ’s gospel within our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and among partners and friends throughout the world.

In a rapidly changing world and in an increasingly hostile culture, we need to **Be Ready to Confess** the Gospel of Christ to a world that desperately needs to hear it. To be proclaimers of the message of salvation is central to our identity as Christ’s people. *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching* (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

When Saint Paul wrote these words to Timothy, he did so as one writing to a fellow pastor, a man specifically called to carrying out the office of the public ministry. And he did so also knowing full well the challenges that faced preachers of the Gospel in the setting of the early church. But he did so also knowing that Timothy had come to the faith through the Holy Spirit working through faithful teaching of a committed mother and grandmother. *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well* (2 Timothy 1:5).

The good news of the Gospel is given to each of us to share with

those whom God places in our sphere of influence regardless of our station in life. I think about my mother and grandmother and their sincere faith that was passed down to me. But my brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and cousins all knew the faith of my grandmother. Proclaiming the salvation won by Jesus is not just “the pastor’s job.” Every single one of us is all called to be ready to confess Christ as God opens the doors for us to do so. You are called to be ready to confess!

The need for sharing Christ is as pronounced today as it has ever been. While it is true that somewhere around 90 percent of Americans claim that they believe in “God,” their understanding of the one, true God is often less than biblical. Add to that the fact that upwards of 60 percent of Evangelical Christians (a category that would include LCMS members) think there may be other ways to salvation outside of faith in Jesus, and what’s worse is 30% of those who claim to be born again Christians don’t believe that Jesus physically rose from the dead. The need to be ready to confess the message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone is as pressing today as ever. Add to that Paul’s realistic assessment of where people were at his time.

*For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4).* It sounds like a commentary on 2017!

As the famous preacher Greg Laurie said in our culture we have an ipod, ipad, iphone, and finally an igod. We make God who we want him to be just like the old testament people wanted to mold the golden calf into their own god.

There is no question that the LWML has had an incredible impact on confessing the Gospel of Jesus with the world. But with all the praise we give it we know that there is another kind of confession that is needed. Confessing Jesus also means confessing our sins.

We have often not been ready to change with the times. We have often tried to hold on to old WAYS of doing things for our own selfish reasons. Because the times are changing so fast, we would rather live in a time that is behind the times. In an ever changing world, we sometimes seek to not change and remain stuck in our sins. We fall in the trap of an igod as well.

The entire Christian church is becoming grayer and grayer with less and less young people. When I was in Virginia for the Liberty

conference, one of the speakers apologized on behalf of the older generation to all the college students for not passing on the faith as well as we should.

And lest you think that I am just criticizing older people, What about the High school senior setting a good example for their high school? What about the 8<sup>th</sup> grader setting an example for his grade school? What about those who are kindergarteners that need to set a good example for the preschoolers? The list goes on and on of the older generations needing to communicate Jesus love to the younger generation.

The Gospel never changes, but we do. And we change for the better, confessing our sins to God, and with the fruit of repentance changing our behavior to be more selfless rather than selfish.

But more than that, we are not just called to change our behavior, but also proclaim the Gospel of Jesus. We are called to spread that good news of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

It appears that the hearing of the Gospel is for our day and age very much out of season, and out of style. The truth doesn't resonate, relate, or mean much for the current culture today.

There is never a perfect time to start an organization like the LWML, but could we have chosen a time more challenging than 1942? The world had been at war for three years and the United States had joined the effort in 1941. Rations were short, many young—and older!—men were preparing to fight overseas. Women were entering the workforce to fill the vacancies left by the new soldiers. The circumstances were challenging, to say the least! People were frazzled, scattered, and confused about what was going on in the world. Sound familiar? Sounds like 2017!

Yet, on July 7-8, 1942, over 100 women—among them twenty-eight formal delegates—met in Chicago and established the LWML. Its purpose was to encourage a greater consciousness among women for “missionary education, missionary inspiration, and missionary service.”

And now the LWML has introduced a new name that can be used in conjunction with LWML, that is Lutheran Women in Mission. Notice that name emphasizes that word “Mission” more than ever.

Jesus criticized the current generation that he lived in that they were always looking for signs. *Luke 11:29 When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man*

*be to this generation.*

They were looking for some proof, they were looking for something exciting, and they were looking for something that could satisfy selfish desires.

Jesus only offered them one thing, Himself, His death on the cross and resurrection. And along with that his Word that spoke of this kind of love for all people that gave them salvation through Jesus's redemptive work. So as we get ready to share that message we always make that the heart and center of what we say and what we do for others. I knew an old district president that used to say, "Keep the main thing the main thing.

There is one thing, one man, that can bring us to God. There is one way that we can connect people to God. This final passage to Timothy describes God's passion and his method of salvation.

**1Timothy2:3b-5** " *God our Savior, ... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* <sup>5</sup> *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* "

Luther would probably be disappointed in himself that he could not communicate to the next generation that he didn't want the church named after him. He said that specifically and that the church should not name itself after him because he was more like a maggot than someone to name a church after.

Nevertheless we call ourselves Lutheran because we have a heritage that proclaims through faith alone, by Grace alone, in Christ alone. And we have continued with that heritage to this day to focus on the truth from scripture as the only way to reach out and spread the Word to others. Amen