

Just the Truth

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

First I want to thank Pastor David and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church for hosting this event and allowing me to speak. I also want to thank everyone who was involved in the preparation of the event and all those who are assisting us today.

Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Moore and I currently reside in northeast NC with my amazing wife, Jennifer, and 2 children, Harrison & Natalie. I work as an Auto Damage Appraiser for North Carolina Farm Bureau. Yes, I work in insurance. And yes, I've seen a thing or two. You have all seen the Farmer's commercials. The fact is that every insurance company has paid out claims similar to those that you see on the commercials.

My job as an appraiser requires a great attention to detail and I work with auto repair shops to estimate damages caused by an accident. Attention to detail is necessary in most walks of life but especially in areas like the auto repair industry. Now having an eye for detail isn't a bad thing at all. It's not about saying one person's way is better than another's or trying to beat another's fault over their head. The future safety of passengers in that vehicle depends on it. Attention to detail should flow from a loving attitude towards the people you mean to serve.

For example, I remember a claim that involved our customer's wheel falling off the vehicle as they were driving, resulting in an accident. As it turned out, they had just had maintenance done to their vehicle (tires rotated, brakes checked, etc) and the mechanic had forgotten to fully tighten the wheel's lug nuts. An oversight that put people's lives in danger.

I worked another claim in which our customer had their vehicle in the body shop for repairs from an accident. The body shop technician was repairing a dent to the right rear of the vehicle and had welded studs in order to heat the sheet metal and pull the dent. Well they negligently walked away for almost an hour and the metal overheated. The inside trim of the car caught on fire and the entire shop ended up burning down. Another costly oversight.

With all the computers and collision avoidance systems coming out on cars these days, oversights can be dangerous. I say all of this to remind us that our Christian faith requires at least the same level of attention to detail. Doctrine and theology are not just for the seminary students; they form the basis for our hope in this life and the next. Our souls will go to heaven or hell for eternity, so getting our beliefs correct should demand our utmost attention to detail. For not only our souls, but the souls of those around us hang in the balance. This is why doctrine matters.

I John 4:1-3 states, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is

in the world already. John the Apostle warns us in this letter to test the spirits, not to assume that just because they come under the name “Christian” that they are.

Verse 2 gives us a prototype of the first Creed of the church- that Christ has come in the flesh from God. The Greek word for “confess” means to profess, agree, publicly declare. It comes from the Greek *homologos*, which means “of one mind”. This is not a confession that sets doctrinal differences aside for the sake of unity. It is a public Creed, a profession, an “I believe” statement and it is in unison with everyone else who makes that same confession. Accepting discord in the church among believers on Articles of Faith is not a sign of spiritual maturity. Rather it is a sure sign that Satan has spread his lies.

The same Greek word for confession is used in 1 Timothy 6:12-16, which states ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called **and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.** ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of **Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before^d Pontius Pilate made the good confession,** ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Notice that in verse 12, Paul reminds Timothy of the public confession about Christ that he made in the presence of many witnesses. This was not some mere testimonial about how Timothy experienced God (like Henry Blackaby’s popular “bible study” circulating churches today). This is not some personal testimony that we have come to expect at a revivalistic crusade. Look at verse 13 where Paul states that Jesus Himself gave a “good confession” in His testimony before Pilate. We are to give the same testimony. And what was this “good confession” that Christ made before Pilate?

Christ’s encounter with Pilate is briefly covered in all the Gospels but His full exchange with Pilate is found in John 18:33-38, which reads, ³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” **Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth.** Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

There is the attention to detail. The Good confession. John told us in his letter that everyone who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. Look closely at verse 37. Jesus said that it was for this purpose he was both born and came into the world. This is not an accidental repetition here. Instead, Jesus is affirming that his person consists of His 2 natures: His humanity & His divinity. He was born in the flesh but He also came into the world as the Son of God. Whenever you read the Scripture, do not overlook these details.

As time went on and heresies continued to try to invade the church, the Good Confession took the form of the 3 great ecumenical Creeds, first the Apostle's Creed, then the Nicene Creed and finally the Athanasian Creed. The Athanasian Creed even closes with this statement, "This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved."

Now you may ask, "I thought we weren't Catholic? Doesn't this conference say, "Not Catholic, Just Lutheran?" True, we are not Catholic in the modern day sense of the term. We are not Roman Catholic and we reject their wide range of errors, all of which stem from them denying that we are justified by God through faith alone. But we are Catholic in the original sense of the word. The term Catholic is Latin and it means "universal". We, who have the Spirit at work in us, will believe, teach, and confess the Good Confession of the Universal faith. And we are of one accord; not divided in doctrine or practice.

With so much emphasis from both Scripture and the early church regarding the Good Confession of our Faith, you must ask why there are whole denominations today that refuse to confess the Creeds publically in their worship services? Are they avoiding the Good Confession of faith? Or do they in fact disagree with it? Or do they simply believe the Good Confession is divisive. Have they replaced the Creeds with a new creed: "Deeds, not creeds!", which is a creed in itself. I have been to such churches in my own journey towards Confessional Lutheranism. Let me explain a little more about my past.

I was baptized and raised in the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod from infancy. My family lived in Harford County MD where we attended church. My family also is Roman Catholic on my father's side. To further complicate things, the Lutheran church where my family attended in Bel Air MD attended a Billy Graham Crusade in the late 1970's where several members of my family went forward and "accepted Christ as their Savior". While we were attending a Lutheran church, the bookshelves at home were filled with mostly non Lutheran material.

Later my parents moved to York PA and we started attending the LCMS church where I was confirmed. I am thankful for my confirmation and believe that the elderly pastor who confirmed me did his best at teaching Lutheran doctrine at age appropriate levels. However, the rest of the church never reinforced the Catechism. Instead, our youth group went to Christian Rock Concerts and were exposed to some rather charismatic and Pentecostal speakers. It was at a Petra Concert at Hershey Park in 1990 that I went forward and "made a decision for Christ" too. Ironically, this occurred during my Confirmation year.

So you could say that the Lutheranism that I was taught was not Confessional or exclusionary. It was "heterodox" in the words of the CLC. A better way of thinking about it is that the faith I was raised with was a Hybrid, sort of like the Toyota Prius. Time would show that I needed attention to detail but instead what I received was dumbed down theology that was painted on with a very wide brush. And sloppy theology doesn't hold up well when hard times come and you are under pressure.

By the grace of God, I had both received and studied enough in Scripture and apologetics to never let go of the core faith. But my faith was shaken when I finally decided to pursue a calling to the ministry at Concordia College in Bronxville NY. I had, through prior experiences, come to realize that there was

something special about Martin Luther and Lutheranism. I had read the book, *Here I Stand* in high school. And I was very excited to go off to study at a Lutheran institution of higher learning and receive instruction from that uniquely Lutheran perspective.

Instead what I found was a wide variety of Professors and instructors who had abandoned the Scriptures and the Good Confession. I was taught evolutionary ideas in Astronomy, the Higher Criticisms of Scripture in Old Testament Survey, and overt humanism in my Ethics class. My freshman comp teacher was agnostic. I found myself running to sources *outside* of Lutheranism in order to defend my faith and educate myself to rebut what I was being taught.

Then there was the immorality and hypocrisy of several other Pre- Seminary students. Luther, after his trip to Rome called it a sewer. Well Concordia Bronxville was my sewer.

Oddly enough it was there that a professor did introduce me to the Book of Concord and told me that all Lutheran doctrine comes from there. He challenged me to find any errors at the college from that book. It was a way of controlling the conversation—framing the narrative—because the Book of Concord was written before Charles Darwin or the Higher Criticisms. This is not to say that I cannot argue against the theory of evolution from the church Creeds and Confessions—I can—at least now. But at that time I was a teenager caught in a sort of chess game with those who knew far more than I about theology and how to manipulate it in their favor.

So I hated the Book of Concord because I hated the way I had to use it to defend the Good Confession from those seeking to exploit any loopholes they could find. While I was encountering theological liberalism at Concordia, my mother and several others in our church back home were discovering that our own pastor doubted much of the Word of God. By the mid nineties, I believed that the Lutheran Church was good for the liturgy, which I have always loved, but the Baptists were the people you turned to if you wanted to seriously study the Bible. And outside of Luther, I didn't know a single Lutheran theologian past or present. No Walther, Chemnitz, Gerhard, Sasse, Pieper; none of them.

So I began a 20 year departure from Lutheranism into the Methodist, Pentecostal, Nondenominational, and finally Southern Baptist churches. I was seeking just the truth—God's word rightly divided and taught. But each path I followed became a dead end. The Plague of liberalism in Protestantism remains the single most underestimated issue of our day. I have heard Methodist and Presbyterian pastors tell me that they weren't sure that Christ was born of a virgin. Remember what John said in his letter. Those who deny the incarnation place themselves outside the Holy Catholic faith. They are the antichrists we were warned about.

And these liberals hide in almost every denomination where the Good Confession is compromised. How many of you, being from the south, have heard of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering? How many of you know the real story of Lottie Moon? If the Southern Baptists venerated their members, Lottie Moon would surely be a saint. She lived in the 19th Century & was the first single woman to take the Gospel to China. She has become synonymous with Baptist missions work and a Christmas offering is taken every December. But most do not know about her one time love, Southern Baptist seminary professor, Crawford Howell Toy.

Toy began questioning the accuracy of the Genesis account of creation after studying the Higher Criticisms in Europe. But it wasn't until after he started teaching that the prophesy of Isaiah 53 was not about Jesus Christ that he was removed. Toy joined the Unitarian church and took up a teaching post at Harvard. In 1881, Lottie Moon broke off the engagement apparently because of his slide into liberalism. Lottie said later after years of missions work in China that her cross was loneliness and she died having never married.

Attention to detail. Toy wasn't removed from the seminary until he was tearing apart the Good Confession in broad daylight. Why? Even worse, how many Crawford Howell Toys are preaching & teaching in churches and schools across America? Going undetected because they have learned how to stay just below the radar- coming just short of overtly denying the Good Confession while at the same time destroying the faith from within.

The Good Confession is always under attack. Remember that every Article of Faith we profess directly impacts the Gospel that we preach. Let me give you some examples and let's start with the Doctrine of Creation. If for example, you believe that God used evolution to create the universe, then you believe that God used death and suffering over millions of years to create life. And if death is part of creation, not the wages of sin, then the need for a Savior is destroyed. If there was death before Adam & Eve sinned, the entire Good Confession falls apart. Why would we need to be saved from sin and death and why would the Bible call death our enemy when God created us to die all along?

Why does Genesis matter? Because the God who spoke the cosmos into existence solely by the power of His Word is the same God who now declares by that same Word that a sinner like me is made righteous for His name's sake. Remember the great hymn, *Thy Strong Word*? First it states, "Thy strong word did cleave the darkness; at thy speaking it was done." Then in the third verse, it states, "Thy strong word bespeaks us righteous bright with Thine own holiness." There is a direct correlation between how God created the universe and how he has justified a wretch like me.

I cannot count how often I have had Christians tell me that Genesis "doesn't matter" and that I need to show Christian love by being tolerant of those who interpret Genesis differently than I do. Sadly, at the last church my family attended, this very issue split our Sunday School Class. But not before the Pastor came to the Sunday School room and attempted reconciliation by carefully not choosing a side but encouraging us to just work out our differences and even ignore them for unity's sake.

Whatever happened to a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Just the truth. That is what I wanted and by God's Grace, I knew where to find it. So, over the issue of Evolution, I had a "Here I Stand" moment in the middle of a Sunday School Class. And I stood alone—that is without a single person from the church's hierarchy, including the Pastor.

With every experience my wife and I had, we began honing in on the Good Confession. Our time with the charismatics was brief, but long enough for me to discover and reject the false teaching that present, earthly physical healing is part of Christ's atonement. The Assemblies of God denomination state on their home page under the section on beliefs their 16 Fundamental Truths: 12. Divine Healing

Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers.

This stems from an old heresy that Christ descended into hell to be tormented by Satan and had himself to be born again down there to be risen. Famous TV evangelist Kenneth Copeland once taught this. They then twist Isaiah 53:3-5 to include present, temporal physical healing in the statement "by His stripes we are healed". This is the teachings of antichrist. Do you know how many people have prayed for physical healing and when it didn't happen, were then abused by their so called church leaders who blamed them for the lack of healing. Stating that God didn't heal them because either they didn't have enough faith or they had secret sin in their life and needed to repent. I have seen some of this nonsense first hand.

When we fail to give a clear Confession of faith, the Gospel becomes muddied and lost. For many years, I wrestled with the question of my own salvation. Was I truly saved in baptism as an infant? Or was I saved when I made a decision for Christ at the Petra concert? This stemmed from a confusion of what the Gospel actually was. Did Christ save me while I was still dead in my sins and trespasses or did I save myself by the decision I made? Was baptism a work of Christ in me and part of the Gospel? Or was it a law that I kept to show God just how serious I was about following Him? Wait, is "following Christ" even part of the actual Gospel?

Fortunately for me, Rick Warren helped me sort it all out. In his book, *Purpose Driven Life*, he states, "One day you will stand before God, and he will do an audit of your life, a final exam, before you enter eternity. The Bible says, 'remember each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God...Yes each of us will have to give a personal account to God'. Fortunately, God wants us to pass this test, so he has given us the questions in advance." I could spend an hour debunking the dangerous theology of Rick Warren but for now, let's just focus on this passage. First, he suggests that God is like the auditor that comes to check up on things and tell you the good and the bad. But God isn't an auditor; He's a judge. His purpose as judge is the conviction of the guilty, not of an audit.

The very analogy of the audit suggests that if you tip the scales in your favor with good works, then your audit score will be adequate. In my line of work, I get audited often. The goal is to do good work so that my audit goes well. But that is not the gospel. Galatians 3:10 states that all who rely on the works of the law are under the curse. On the day of judgment, God isn't giving you a final exam to see how you do. Again, this analogy demonstrates that if I study hard and prep right, I can pass the test. Thus, I can save myself, ***without ever needing the cross.***

But fortunately, and this is rather comical—fortunately for you, God wants you to pass the test. He gave you the answers in advance. Do you notice what is missing so far from Rick Warren's presentation of

the Gospel? Christ! Well let's continue and see where Warren goes with this. "From the Bible we can surmise that God will ask us 2 crucial questions:

1. What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ? God won't ask about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust Him?
2. What did you do with what I gave you? What did you do with your life—all the gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, and resources God gave you? Did you spend them on yourself, or did you use them for the purposes God made you for?

Never is the focus on what Christ has done for us. Consider the first question—what did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ? Um, no. The real question is what did He do for you? The answer to that question is heard every time you take communion (provided the words of institution are read). But, ok, he asks if you accepted with Jesus did for you. Wait, what exactly did he do for me? But Warren doesn't answer this because as he said himself, he isn't a fan of doctrine. And Warren ignores 1 John 4. It is a lie to suggest that God is not concerned about your doctrine. Warren opens the door for the possibility that a person can deny the Incarnation of Christ—the Virgin Birth—and still be saved. But God's Word states something completely different, as did the early church. Remember the Athanasian Creed that states, "This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved." Remember all three letters of John. 2 John 9 states that everyone who does not abide in the teachings of Christ doesn't have God and that if anyone brings to you a teaching contrary to the Apostles (the Scripture) that you are not to even receive him into your house.

John took false doctrine very seriously and would not associate with anyone who attacked the Good Confession. Now, the disciple whom Jesus loved had a disciple himself. John the Apostle taught the church father Polycarp and Polycarp in turn taught Irenaeus, 2nd century bishop. Irenaeus recounts a time that the Apostle John and Polycarp went to a bathhouse in Ephesus and upon seeing a man named Cerinthus, the very gnostic heretic that caused the Apostle to write the Gospel named after him, he rushed out of the bathhouse screaming "let us flee lest even the bathhouse collapse because Cerinthus the enemy of truth is in there!" (A.H.3.3.4)

Irenaeus himself states, "Those, then who assert that Christ was ... not born in the flesh and was not made man are still under the ancient condemnation; they extend patronage to sin, since according to them death has not be overcome..." (A.H.3.18.7) Again, Irenaeus says, "For the apostles who were sent to search out these who had gone astray, to give sight to those who had lost their sight, to bring medicine to those who were ill, did, of course, not speak with them according to their opinion at that time, but according to the manifestation of the truth. For persons would not be doing the right thing, if they were to advise blind people who are about to fall over a precipice to keep on that most dangerous path, as if it were indeed the right path and they would happily come to their destination. What doctor who wishes to cure a sick person will act according to the desires of the sick person and not according to what is in keeping with medical science?" (A.H.3.5.2)

Have you heard the statement, “Don’t miss heaven by 18 inches?” This is the distance between your head and your heart. Or “heart knowledge, not head knowledge saves”. While it is true that mere awareness of facts does not constitute faith, “head knowledge” is part of faith. For, as our Lutheran Confessions teach, faith consists of three things and the first is knowledge or the Good Confession. The other two are agreement and trust in that Good Confession. When you know the Good Confession and agree and trust that it is true and that Christ died “For you”, that is saving faith. Knowing, believing, and resting on the promises of God in His word is another way to put it.

Rick Warren represents a strain of Christendom that is hostile to the Creeds because they believe it is head knowledge. They are against the Good Confession of faith, replacing it with subjective and mystical experiences. They are not of one accord nor do they wish to be. They have a Statement of Faith which they are free to choose to ignore in part or completely. They celebrate diversity of doctrine—as long as that diversity doesn’t include infant baptism.

Back to Warren. Having swept doctrine away, Warren mixes law and gospel in a most terrible way. He states, “Did you accept what Jesus did for you **and did you learn to love and trust Him**”. Good students of the Catechism, what does this sound like? Remember the 1st Commandment? And what does this mean for us? **The First Commandment.**

Thou shalt have no other gods.

What does this mean?--Answer.

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

This love and trust that Warren speaks of is not the hope and certainty in the promises of what Christ did for us, as in faith. Rather it is a love and trusting that really means a commitment of your life to Christ. So, Rick Warren tells his readers that part of the final exam that God will administer is that they not only have to believe in what God’s Son did for them, but they must also master the 1st Commandment! Loving and Trusting Christ is a keeping of the 1st Commandment—having no other gods. Warren encourages his readers to gauge their salvation before God by their ability to keep the 1st Commandment of the Law instead of faith alone.

Warren reinforces his “works righteousness” with question 2. What did you do with your life! Sounds like a Twisted Sister song. Did you spend money on yourself? Well did you? Wait, is spending money on yourself always wrong? Notice how he frames that narrative—did you spend that inheritance you received on needed repairs to your own house or did you give it to the Lord’s work—aka donation to my church or ministry! It almost sounds like the sale of indulgences. I have news for you. Sometimes spending money on yourself is the Lord’s Will. “Give us this day our daily bread.”

This inattention to details will land some souls in hell. Yet how many churches, How many so called Lutheran churches have done the Purpose Driven Life study?

But when doctrine doesn't matter and the gospel is trampled under foot and replaced with works righteousness, it's no wonder that people can make decisions for Christ without ever receiving what Christ did for them! Joshua Harris is a well known Pentecostal speaker and writer who as a teenager/young adult hosted the "New Attitude Conference" for Christian singles back in the 1990's. My mother took my sisters to one of those in PA. In 2010, an older Harris wrote a book called *Dug Down Deep: Unearthing what I believe and why it Matters*. The book was written from a Pentecostal/Calvinist perspective—yes that's actually a thing now. And it is to be lauded for at least attempting to wake up a non credal segment of Christendom. But it is most noteworthy for this following passage about the death and resurrection of Christ:

"I grew up being told that Jesus died on the cross for me. But for too long this information had no real meaning. Of course it was really nice of him and everything. But it was like someone spending a lot of money on a gift you don't really want or need. It made no sense to me. **Even after I chose to give my life to God, the Cross was a blurry concept in my thinking.**"

Did you catch that? He made a decision for Christ without every receiving in faith the gift of the forgiveness of sins. Sounds like he took Rick Warren's audit. Romans 3:20 and Gal 2:16 make it clear that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. His decision to give his life to the Lord had not brought about salvation but condemnation for it was nothing more than works righteousness.

Harris continues, "I have a vivid memory from this period in my life. I was a young teenager. I was walking into our brown duplex on Kane Rd in Gresham, Oregon. As I opened the door from the carport to the Kitchen, I had the thought, *I don't understand why Jesus had to die*. This matter of fact statement just ran through my mind. ... Sadly, I wasn't distressed enough by my lack of understanding to do anything about it. I didn't ask anyone to explain the Cross to me. I didn't go read my Bible. And there was no sense of urgency in my heart, no sense I needed Jesus' death to occur. I wonder how many people in churches today have the same unclear thoughts about the Cross. When you compare this modern fuzzy thinking with the sharp focus on Christ's death in the pages of Scripture, you can't help but think that something is very wrong."

Yes something is wrong. Something is missing—the truth that sets us free. The truth that we were dead in our sins and trespasses, earning the right wage for our sin—death. Yes, death is a wage—a payment to all who work. But God does not delight in the destruction of the wicked, which we all are. All of us have turned away. Our mouths are like open graves and there is not one that seeks after God. But God so love the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. He paid the price for our sins and even bore our sins in his own body on the cross. And through the Word and the Sacraments, God brings the precious blood of Christ to our very souls. So, God made me alive in baptism as His Word declares. Christ died for my sins and they are washed away. That's how I'm saved and that's when I was saved. The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us so He could be the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. And our faith is not the means of salvation—God's not pleased with us because we believe. Rather faith is the outstretched hand that receives the salvation God already accomplished. It's the hand of the beggar who receives from God and only God what he could never earn himself.

This is the truth. This is Biblical. This is the Good Confession. This is Lutheran. Many people wander through the evangelical industrial complex—that Christian pop culture of the here and now seeking some life application of the Bible; treating Christianity like another type of self help. They fill the churches and megachurches while those who earnestly seek the truth are ignored, marginalized, neutralized, and even ridiculed and driven out.

This is not to say that only Confessional Lutherans can or will be saved. Our denomination doesn't save. Our title doesn't save. Christ saves. But it does impress the urgency of getting the Good Confession out. How many people do you know from these other churches who say they are Christians are really scratching their heads behind closed doors like Josh Harris thinking they have no idea why Christ died for them. Merely memorizing a Creed is not salvation but without that Good Confession, what are people putting their trust in? Faith doesn't save because it has intrinsic power. Faith saves because of the power of the One in whom we place that faith. Unlike Josh Harris, how many people will go to their graves never distressed enough about their lack of understanding why Jesus died on the Cross and spend eternity in hell after making a decision for Christ?

My search for the truth of God's Word lead me away from the LCMS, which is sadly a church divided in doctrine and practice. My journey took me through the main protestant denominations and ultimately back to the Book of Concord. And The Purpose Driven Life study had something to do with that. I was already leaning Calvinist at the time the Baptist church decided to do the study but among other things, there is one thing about the book that really bothered me. It was a quote in Chapter 7 attributed to Irenaeus the church father I mentioned earlier. And Warren refers to him as St. Irenaeus. Now I don't have a problem with calling Irenaeus a saint but I knew something was up when a Baptist preacher used the term. The quote is "The glory of God is a human being fully alive."

Since Warren doesn't have a bibliography, I did my own research. The quote was not from Irenaeus. It is from the New Catholic Catechism Article 293-294. I was furious about the deception. I then found the real quote from Irenaeus which can be found in A.H.4.20.7. The context is that Irenaeus was challenging the gnostics who believed that the material world, including our physical bodies were evil. Irenaeus was talking about the Word becoming flesh; the Good Confession. The church father states, "And for this reason did the Word become the dispenser of the paternal grace for the benefit of men, for whom He made such great dispensations, revealing God indeed to men, but presenting man to God, and preserving at the same time the invisibility of the Father, lest man should at any time become a despiser of God, and that he should always possess something towards which he might advance; but, on the other hand, revealing God to man through many dispensations lest man, falling away from God altogether,, should cease to exist. **For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God.**"

Realizing that the real Irenaeus quote was about Christ becoming flesh and blood (the glory of God in a living man)so that we could behold God through Christ and not about you learning to just be yourself, I decided to read the works of Irenaeus. I read through all 5 volumes of Against the Heresies and by the time I was done, so was any notion that the belief systems of the majority of protestants had a right understanding of the Articles of Faith laid out in Scripture. Irenaeus especially destroyed the notion that

the Sacraments were mere ordinances with no heavenly connection. My journey towards Confessional Lutheranism started with my researching the Scriptures on the topic of Holy Communion. And Irenaeus sparked that. And all the while I thought, this church father is only 1 generation removed from the actual Apostles. If he got it wrong then what does that say about all of Christianity?

This is not to say that the individual person didn't make errors from time to time. Irenaeus did. But his Good Confession or "Rule of Faith" as he called it was a prototype of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. On the Articles of Faith, he did not err. From there, it was a question of whether the Lutheran doctrine on the Lord's Supper was correct or the Calvinist doctrine. I read Calvin's Institutes and the Book of Concord. It was plain that the side arguing from Scripture was the Lutheran theologians. From there the rest began falling into place. I also read Luther's Commentary to the Galatians, which really laid out the gospel in a way I had not heard in years. It also caused me to revisit Holy Baptism.

Confessions are not designed to replace the Scripture. They are there to help guide and explain it. They also exist to address false teachings. When someone says to me that they don't need Creeds or Confessions because they have their Bible, I remind them that their Bible says no Scripture is of private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20) and that the Good Confession is evidence that we have the Holy Spirit as John himself says. Besides, if you truly believe in these Articles of Faith, then why balk that people took the time to write them out? Only a deceiver with ungodly motives would desire for you to ignore the Good Confession of faith.

And so I am here because I believe in Scripture alone. I want the full counsel of the Word of God; the Law and the Gospel, the Word and the Sacrament. A faith anchored not in my experiences or my feelings or the voices I hear in my head that I think is God but in outside, objective, and verifiable truth—God's own Word. I want Christ, whom the Scriptures testify (Jn 5:39). The Bible is not about my life application nor should I read myself and my situations into the text. Instead, the Scripture is about Christ from the life of Joseph, to David's defeating Goliath, to Daniel's Lions den. All of these are types and shadows of Him, not me.

Its been 500 years since Martin Luther began the Reformation. We are still reaping the benefits of his labor and of those forefathers that went before us. I want just the truth. I have had many "Here I Stand" moments in my life. If we are truly Just Lutheran, we will have those moments often. Hybrid theology conceals the truth and makes us complicit in the lie. The loss of the Gospel and the tyranny of Satan have their foundations in doctrinal compromise. No church is perfect nor can they be this side of heaven. But we must fight the good Fight and continue to affirm the Good Confession like Paul told Timothy for ours and our children's sake. Amen.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts & minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.