

Dear Friends in Christ,

50 years ago (February 19, 1974), a majority of students and 45/50 professors at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis walked out in protest against the Synod suspending seminary president John Tietjen. Most call it “the walkout.” Those professors and students founded Christ Seminary in Exile, nicknamed *Seminex* (for seminary in exile.) Ironically, *semi* is the Latin word for half, and *nex* is the Latin word for dead.

What was the big deal? Why did the Synod suspend Tietjen? To say it briefly, it was all about the Bible. The seminary had adopted modern academic methods in reading the Bible. The historical-critical method of reading the Bible treats the Scriptures as any other book, and not as the inspired Word of God. Famously, professors were teaching that Jonah wasn’t really swallowed by a fish. Many said it didn’t matter if there was a real historical Adam and Eve who fell into sin in real time. Many even doubted whether or not Jesus actually came back from the dead.

It was particularly dangerous because the faculty were using Lutheran-sounding words. Everything became about the Gospel. For the record, I love the Gospel. Woe to me if I don’t preach it! (1 Cor 9:16). But the seminary had separated the Gospel from the Bible. The Gospel became “good news in a bad situation” and nothing more. The Gospel was robbed of its substance. It didn’t matter if Jesus actually came back from the dead; all that mattered is that you believe. This is existentialism in a nutshell, which I have a strong aversion to. If Jesus didn’t come back from the dead, then we have no hope (1 Cor 15).

The seminary had adopted a position called Gospel Reductionism. Only the Gospel, and nothing else in the Bible, was authoritative. Preachers weren’t allowed to preach against real sins, and weren’t allowed to espouse how to live the Christian life. Already in the 1970s, the professors were against condemning homosexuality and abortion because it wasn’t the Gospel.

If you want to see the fruits of where this led, just look at the ELCA. (Those who walked out also formed a church body called the AELC, which merged with the ALC and LCA in 1988 to form the ELCA. I know, alphabet soup. Without *Seminex*, the ECLA wouldn’t exist.) Google “sparkle creed” sometime. The Gospel is meaningless if we don’t believe what the entire Bible says. If we don’t believe that we’re sinful, then what does it mean to be saved from our sins? If Christianity isn’t allowed to tell us how to live our lives, then why did Jesus and St. Paul tell us how to live our lives?

You may be wondering what in the world I’m doing with all this circuit newsletter/website and campus ministry stuff. Why did the circuit pastors go down to the Capitol in St. Paul last year, and why are we going again in April with a group called Christ Ambassador Network which isn’t

exclusively Lutheran? We're trying (and of course we're hopeless without the Spirit) to build a Christian consensus among our congregations and on our campuses and in our state. *The* issue is the Bible. We can work with other Christian groups *if* they hold that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God. More needs to be said on building this Christian consensus, but that's the idea.

Stay calm, and stay faithful. Jesus Christ really died on a cross and really came back from the dead to save you from your sins. He's proven over and over again that His Word is reliable.

In Christ,  
Pastor