

REFORMATION SUNDAY 2020

Characters

Dr. Martin Luther – Blaine Anderson
Fr. Tetzl, OP – Brian Aspen
Indulgence hawker – Teresa Aspen
Pastor - Chuck Aurand

ACT I

Setting: Our Sunday worship. As the Liturgist is preparing to lead the Call to Worship.

Indulgence Hawker: (Street British accent) Step right up and get your indulgences. Step up, now. You don't you want your grandmum to burn in Purgatory any longer than she has to, now do ya!

[As the pastor introduces the Call to Worship, turn and face the pulpit as you wait impatiently.]

Pastor: Please stand in body or in spirit and join me in our responsive
“Call to Worship.”....

Hawker: Get your indulgences. Get your indulgences. Don't let your loved ones burn, now. And while you're at it, you get to help build the biggest church yet for the Holy Father in Rome.

Pastor speaking up: Good Sir! We are trying to conduct a PROTESTANT service of worship here.

Hawker: So? You go right ahead, gov'ner.

Pastor: Let us begin with our opening call to wor—

Hawker: Get your indulgences. “As the money in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.”

Pastor: EXCUSE ME! Go peddle your worthless scraps of paper elsewhere. And be quiet, or better yet, try worshipping with us.

Hawker: [walks to the pulpit shaking his fist in the air, and then walks back out of the sanctuary shouting all the while] He can't do that. Does he think he's the Pope?! Who does he think he is? I'll tell the Bishop! I'll tell the magistrate!

[From the back of the sanctuary]
I'll tell the barkeep down at the pub.
Yeah, that'll help me forget my woes, it will!

Pastor: and join me in our responsive “Call to Worship.”....

ACT II

As the Pastor is reading the Psalm lesson of the day

Hawker: [speaking to an unseen priest] That's the one, Abbott. I think he's crazy or something. I don't think he believes in indulgences. What's that? (pause like you are listening) OK, I'll ask him.

Page 2

“Hey, you in the pulpit! Can you actually read that Bible? I’ll wager you can’t even read that book!

Pastor: Yes, I can. It’s in my language...English. But I can read it in the original Hebrew and Greek too. It just takes me a lot longer, but I keep at it.

Hawker: (to the unseen Abbot) Hey Abbott, can you read Greek and Hebrew? Only Latin, and not very good at that hey? (pause)

Yeah, we’ll get Tetzal...He’ll show ‘em, he will!

[Shouting] Hey everyone, we’ll get Tetzal, the Dominican friar.

[The pastor is looking shaken and reads the psalm lesson]

ACT III

Pastor has finished reading the Scripture [Gospel] lesson.

The Hawker and Tetzal come in.

Hawker: There ‘e is... that other preacher there.

Tetzal: Good sir. Pardon? I hear that you don’t want indulgences sold here. Let me tell you about the good of indulgences. I have been chosen by the Holy Father to be in charge of selling these blessed papers since 1506 and it’s now 1517...that’s 11 years!

An indulgence says that because of the purchaser’s virtue, (aside) made manifest by their purchase, that their good virtue credit can be transferred to another soul to get them out of Purgatory. Hence the old ditty, “Once the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from Purgatory springs.”

Pastor: Hey, you are Fr. Tetzal of the academic Order of the Preachers...the Dominican order? Just wait here, I have a brother of the cloth to you.

Dr. Martin Luther of Wittenberg, Germany. Why don’t you two talk?

[Enter the great Martin Luther.]

I am Dr. Martin Luther. Hello Tetzal. Are you still peddling indulgences?

You know I, Martin Luther, had wanted to preach against indulgencies for several years prior to your appearance in the district of Wittenberg in 1517. The problems with preaching about indulgences are so many...first, Purgatory isn’t biblical. Purgatory is an imagined place where people who did not live perfect lives went after death. Slowly, they were punished and their sins expunged until these deceased individuals were holy enough to be in heaven—in the presence of God. But really, it’s nowhere in the biblical scriptures. I have begun to doubt that it even exists.

Pastor: By November 7, 1519, in a splendid use of a double negative, Luther wrote to George Spalatin: 'It is certain that no one is a heretic who does not believe that there is a purgatory.' A few years later, Luther’s language becomes so pointed, he calls Purgatory a "fabrication of the devil".

Luther: Second, you simply can't transfer righteousness from one person to another. Scripture says in Jeremiah 31:29, "In those days they shall no longer say: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But everyone shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."

Everyone shall be judged individually by Jesus at the end. You can't make me righteous, and I can't make you righteous.

Third, you can't buy your way into heaven, no matter how worthy the cause....

Tetzel: (interrupting) You're wrong there...This money is being raised to build a new cathedral in Rome. We'll call it, "St Peter's Basilica". It will be a fortress against sin!" That's a good cause.

Luther: A church where God's word is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered would be a good thing indeed. But it does not change the fact that God in Christ judges us all individually. No indulgence can make up for our sinfulness. Besides, it is Jesus' atoning blood which gives us forgiveness. Romans 6:23 says that "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

People don't have to pay to go to heaven! I protest for the Gospel...the good news in Jesus Christ!

Tetzel (to the Hawker dejectedly) "Let's go. I'm all done. It's over....it's over....sob! [running out of the back of the church].

Pastor: Poor guy. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, after Luther's reformation took off, Tetzel's life went very badly. He only held a bachelor's degree when he faced off with Martin Luther, a university professor with his full doctorate. Tetzel didn't stand a chance.

I quote from the Catholic Encyclopedia, "Luther's agitation having frustrated further efforts to popularize the granted indulgence of eight years, Tetzel, deserted by the public, broken in spirit, wrecked in health, retired to his monastery at Leipzig in 1518.

Then in the middle of January, 1519, Luther graciously penned a letter in which he tried to console Tetzel by declaring "that the agitation was not that of [Tetzel's] creation". Tetzel died soon after, received an honorable burial, and was interred before the high altar of the Dominican church at Leipzig."

Luther: Really, I had no animosity against that poor fellow. Really, when I heard about his selling these indulgences, I wanted to bring some entertainment to our little college town of Wittenberg. So, I was challenging him to a fun little debate, but he took it so seriously. Yes, I did, and do, believe everything that I said, but it was supposed to be intellectual fun when so many people would be in town for the All Saints Day festival.

Pastor: Yet from this beginning, the Protestant Reformation had begun. It was a call to Salvation. The Protestants preached, as do we today, the five "alones", Christ Alone...Faith Alone...Grace Alone...Scripture Alone...To God be the Glory Alone.

Although the Protestant Reformation was begun during a combative time, we need to make three important points.

Luther: First, I, Martin Luther, never set out to start a new denomination...a new church. My wish was that the Roman Church would return to its roots. However, I was excommunicated for my efforts thus catalyzing the Protestant Reformation.

Second, almost all of the things that I called for were later instituted by the Roman Church at the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council. These reforms included having an educated clergy who could actually read the bible...worship services said in the language of the people instead of Latin; the translation of the Bible into the language of the people; and of course, an end to the selling of indulgences for money, although to this day, indulgences are still granted in the Roman Church for the saying of prayers on behalf of other people.

Third, Jesus prayed fervently that all his followers might be one. In John 17:20-21, "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one."

As members of the United Church of Christ, you pray, and continue to pray, that all denominations may be united, if not in name, then in purpose and in love. Your denomination calls you to love and appreciate the gifts of all denominations, and to work with your Christian brothers and sisters as we all serve our resurrected Savior.

Pastor: The Protestant Reformation was born on All Hallows Eve in 1517, when Martin Luther tacked his 95 points of debate on the Church door at Wittenberg. It was a call to Reform. It was a call to live as authentic Christians in the world.

As Protestants we protest for the Gospel, for Christ Alone (he is the Son of God)...Faith Alone (it by faith that we receive salvation)...Grace Alone (we cannot earn salvation based on our actions, but only through the grace of God)...Scripture Alone (Scripture is a witness without parallel to the very WORD of God—that is Jesus Christ)...To God be the Glory Alone (for all good things come from God).

Luther: All Praise and Glory and Honor be to our God. Amen and Amen.

Pastor: And that is why he, Martin Luther, is one of our greatest "Heroes of Faith." Amen!

Sources:

- The Catholic Encyclopedia
- <http://lutherantheologystudygroup.blogspot.com/2011/06/luthers-view-on-purgatory.html>
- <http://www.history.com/topics/reformation>