

The Installation of the Rev. Dr. Rick Stuckwisch
President of the Indiana District – LCMS
Zion Lutheran Church, Ft. Wayne, IN
September 6, 2022
Titus 1:5-9

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

“The road to hell is paved with the skulls of priests.” That is a saying of uncertain provenance, sometimes attributed to St. John Chryostom, other times to St. Athanasius. Whoever came up with it, the man was sure about the destructive nature of false doctrine and that the scandalous immorality of preachers would lead people away from the Way, Truth, and Life, into eternal damnation. St. Paul knew this before anyone else in the churches he founded did. And so by the Holy Spirit, he wrote the words of Titus 1; God through the Apostle’s pen revealing who can be a presbyter and a bishop.

Tonight, we are to find our joy in the fact that he has made you (Pastor Stuckwisch) both a presbyter and a bishop, an elder and overseer. You are a man- by the grace of God, above reproach, the husband of one wife whose children and grandchildren are believers. All who know you know the mercy of God you proclaim is also the mercy of God you believe and have received. So, this district, imploring the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, chose you, a man not arrogant, or quick tempered, not a drunkard, violent or greedy for gain. You are hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. It is by these gifts received from God and manifested in your life, that the Church rejoices and gives thanks.

But along with the personal traits there must be the teaching. Our manhood, as the redeemed of God, and the traits and evidences of the Spirit in our lives, cannot save anyone. The godly life, then is to be accompanied by the confession of the truth, its proclamation, and instruction. That is, as you hold to the trustworthy Word taught to you, it is to be taught by you. The teaching you received from your own sainted father, your teachers, and faithful instructors at our seminary, has been handed down to you as a gift. Your holding fast to what you have received, then has led to your giving instruction in sound doctrine for all these years at Emmaus, and around the Church as you have taught her in many places, and now in this office. You are to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. This you know by revelation of the Word of God. It is the teaching, the doctrine of Jesus Christ that gives life and opens heaven itself.

So then, one of your greatest tasks as President, will be to make sure that such a way to hell, paved by the skulls of Lutheran pastors, does not happen. For the pastors under your care and oversight need to be taught by you. You are to see to it that souls are not lost by false

teaching and ungodly lives of those called to preach and teach the Gospel. You are to preach and teach and even discipline the men under your charge, so that a road to hell is not paved with the skulls of wicked pastors, but the way of immortality is preached by them. You are to see to it that salvation in Christ is proclaimed, taught, and lived in each day in this world and then in the world to come. Your oversight of the pastors of this district means that their doctrine and life are to be judged, by you. And this is a heavy load to bear. But even more your duties not only the oversight of the pastors, but the congregations themselves, all the churches of God in this district, all those who teach and all those who learn. How to bear this responsibility You have Christ, and He will not forsake you. You are His servant, called to do your duty. Your task is like that of Titus, who was to put into order the presbyters and bishops according to the Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit that St. Paul gave him. So that they may give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. But what is this sound doctrine? And to what end does it come? What is the point of this oversight and instruction? This St. Paul also reveals to Titus-

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all men, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Titus 2:11-14

This is the trustworthy word, this is the sound doctrine, this the proclamation that is needed by everyone here tonight, everyone in this district, everyone in our synod, and of course everyone in this world. It is the preaching of heaven. The grace of God has appeared, and it brings salvation for all men, it brings salvation to you, all of you. Through it you renounce the way to hell, ungodliness, worldly passions, and live anew, left controlled, upright, godly, and patient lives, waiting for what we hope for to be revealed- the very glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. To see what we hope for, eternal life, the sound doctrine is to be taught, preached. This is means God has instituted to bring people to heaven – His Holy Word purely preached and taught. Only the teaching of Jesus Christ gives eternal life, rest for burdened consciences, and hope in this world. The sound doctrine proclaims our great God and Savior, how He gave himself to redeem us. And that happened at his cross.

Your redeemer is Jesus Christ paid a price for your lawlessness. He paid a price to purify you for himself, for you all to be his own possession, and that price was His shed blood, His innocent suffering and death. The true high priest's sacred head was wounded, and now His bodily resurrection is proclaimed as the way of eternal life though the forgiveness of all sins – your sins, your lawlessness. Salvation from such lawlessness is through the atoning sacrifice of the one keeper of the law, the eternal Son of God, in flesh, our great God and savior Jesus Christ. And that atonement did happen. This through the sound teaching of it, of the merciful work of Christ as the Father put all your sins on him, salvation is put into your ears, and it is yours. The Son of God has for himself a people, by taking all people's sins into his own body and receiving the Father's wrath against them all, and it is by this act of atonement, that you have such a blessed hope. You are God's people, from smallest baptized child here to the president of the Indiana district, salvation comes to all the same way, the Word of God, the Gospel of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ. And this is what your ministry, dear Pastor Stuckwisch, has as its foundation, it is the foundation of our life together – The Word of God. And by the Word of God and the work of the Spirit through it, you are to be zealous for sound doctrine, zealous for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and zealous for good works. The road to heaven is open through the blood of our redeemer Jesus Christ alone. The road to heaven is open right now.

And so brother, as St .Paul wrote to Titus- *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Titus 2:15.*
Amen.