

You shouldn't be here. Neither should I, or him, according to the work and wisdom of man. 50 years ago this summer, emotions ran high, many heated arguments. St. Martin had a pastoral vacancy filled by an uncertified man to be the new pastor, with the placement, full blessing and support of the District President, a man from the group who walked out of the seminary during the liberal Battle over the Bible in the LCMS- that God's word is still holy, unchanging truth, so 200 congregation found themselves, like little St. Martin.

Eventually as this summer, 50 years ago, progressed, 31 members, the minority, true Lutherans lose out, lose their building, their congregation; St. Martin will eventually, soon end up in the ELCA. Family and friends torn apart over God's Word. Those 31 members, the true 1908 LCMS congregation, would start meeting in homes, this summer 50 years ago, and couple years later, with what little they had built a church. They couldn't dream to see what the Lord has done this day.

What might have seemed like hopeless, uncertain how God could possible work things out, perhaps not unlike Elijah, all seems loss, seems hopeless, how could things possible work out, just 7000 left, the rest forsaking the Lord to following their our ideas, their own wisdom.

This place should not be here if it was up to man, none of us should be here. There are times in all our lives, how could things possible work out, how does God bring any good out of the trials, life so uncertain, perhaps you feel hopeless. **Master we toiled all night and took nothing.** That's the motto of man if there ever was. 'We work, we toil, and then nothing.' But it doesn't end there! What does St. Peter then say, going against the working and wisdom of man? **But at your word I will...** As in the Psalm, **You are my Lord, I have no good apart from you.**

So 2007 a naïve, impatient, stubborn, certified man is Called here, first unretired pastor in 30 years to serve in a place that shouldn't be here, that morning 15 people were Divine Service in a building people liken to a doublewide trailer. Even looking back at the 100-year history, we should've ended many times over. I spent much of the first year, when the phone rings, "St. Martin Lutheran Church, no you want the other St. Martin Lutheran church ½ mile away, no I don't know their number." That's what stubborn Germans gets you. But "we are the true St. Martin." Well, according to Scripture, our Confessions, Luther, we are. So 17 years ago right now, the small groups from St. Martin and Emmaus gather for the first time under the banner of Risen Savior. A risen, lifted up as He says, **I draw all people unto myself,** Risen Savior on the cross, from the grave, **we preach Christ crucified.** What else is there? **The Lord is my chosen portion, you hold my lot.** The work and wisdom of the Lord alone, that stubborn Germans and **other saints in the land**

in whom is all My delight gather in the place. This place, you are only here, by the work and wisdom of the Lord.

We preach Christ crucified. For all we have, all we teach, all we are flows from the crucified One, with water and blood from His side to give us life from a font and altar, joined to the power of God, Wisdom of God in the flesh for you.

But at your word I will... receive your gifts, be forgiven, **At your word, I will** struggle against my wisdom, my flesh. **at your word you hold my lot.** My very being. **At your word,** I am healed, restored. **At your Word you make know to me the paths of life,** right here. **In your presence there is fullness of joy;** **At your Word,** I have joy, a life, that will never end. **At your Word I will** bind myself each day to life intentionally Lutheran, Christian as your child.

You look at Elijah, St. Paul and the early Church, the Reformation this congregation, in the hands of men it seems hopeless, all is loss, they all will fail. Look there again at the Psalms, **I have set the Lord before me, I shall not be shaken,** amid all that comes against you, His people, His church, **therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices, my flesh also dwells secure.**

For the Lord cast His net, came for you and so many who lived and laughed and cried and served and sacrificed and suffered and died so you could sit there and dare called yourself: Lutheran. The Lord brought forth this house to **catch you** in His nets. He only comes for sinners. No one, that means no one, should dare walk into this place and somehow think they are not as bad a sinner as someone else; like St. Peter's **depart from me for I am a sinful man-** unworthy, unable to come before a holy God. Repent. Jesus desires to dwell from a boat, this nave, in a House, to not depart from sinful man. Here, for the lost, for sinners, for dregs, failure broken, for you, this place for the hurting, the wounded **do not be afraid.** For you He comes to make you - **saints,** holy one **in whom is all My delight.** And He does delight in you.

Behold, His House here. This defines you: a place of heaven on earth, a place for sinners to bask in the forgiving presence of the Lord; that we and generations may come here, standing firm in His unchanging truth, rejoice, never give up hope, keep up the good fight of faith. **But at your Word, I will...** for the **preaching Christ crucified** to resound unto the end, to celebrate His feast, as St. Paul, **as often as you eat and drink you proclaim, preach His death,** crucified, **until He comes again.** No one gathered 17 years ago, uncertainty of the future, from very trying times, even hopeless, defeated past, could imagined this place, imagined how God would work things, we'd be gathered here An incredible, blessed 17 years; be in awe, humbled at what the Lord brings now and in the years to come, by His grace alone, **our victory has been won, the Kingdom our, remaineth.**