

**Sermon For the Ordination/Installation
of
Pastor Kasongo Gui Kabeo
International Lutheran Church of Zion
August 14, 2011**



Text: 2 Corinthians 4:13 - 15 (NIV)

¹³It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

¹⁵All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Theme: A Faith which Causes us to Speak

I. Our Christian faith drives us to confess Christ.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of the first president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, a pastor by the name of CFW Walther. When the synod was founded in 1847, there were only 12 congregations with a combined membership of about 3,000 souls. It is almost unbelievable how the synod grew in its first 50 years. By 1875 there were 107,000 members and 704 congregations. By that time there were 600 schools with 35,000 students. Twenty-five years later in 1900 the membership in the synod increased by 700% to 728,000 members and 2,147 congregations. Today membership in our church has stayed about the same for the last 40 years at 2.5 million members.

In a sermon to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the synod Walther reflected on its growth. He said that it came because they had the proper foundation. He makes it clear that it was not because of any bureaucratic planning, but simply, “I believe, therefore I have spoken,” was the only reason.¹ They believed the Word of God and the confessions of the Lutheran Church with their whole hearts. That faith caused them to work tirelessly to share the Gospel. Here are just a couple of examples: Numerous circuit riders put thousands of miles on their horses and wagons as they brought the Gospel to the new settlers on the American frontier. In 1872 a Pastor Theodore Merkens, covered almost 7,000 miles on horse and buggy.² Pastors served up to 40 congregations at a time. They also endured a lot of hostility. Lutheranism was new to many Americans. When Pastor Schwan, who worked on the questions at the end of the *Small Catechism* preached his first sermon in Salem, MO, a group of Unitarian youths were determined that there would be no Lutheran pastor in town, so they rattled the doors and windows of the church during the entire sermon. Pastor Schwan finally went

¹*Brosamen*, page 556

²*The Church through the Ages*, page 515

out and spoke to them, and many of them eventually became member of the church..³ The pastors and people of the Missouri Synod of that era worked tirelessly to share the Gospel. They believed it with their whole hearts and had to share it. God richly blessed their labors.

There were also many people who shared that same Gospel with Pastor Gui. A number of years ago, our congregation was approached and asked if we would allow your congregation to hold services here. To be honest, this was probably the greatest risk that either of us have ever taken. You were just getting to know the Lutheran Church. Many of you were probably a little afraid and so were many members of our congregation. Benediction took you under our wing, and you willingly became a part of our fellowship. But it all came about because of other pastors who believed and had to share their Lutheran faith with Pastor Gui. It began with Pastor Ikhani, who recently became a pastor in our church himself. He came into contact with Pastor Gui, and brought him to meet other pastors in our area. One of them was Pastor Vic Fischer, who is currently at Gospel. There were many breakfasts at George Webb as Pastor Fischer taught the *Small Catechism* to Pastor Gui. We owe Pastor Fischer our deep gratitude for what we celebrate today. Later Pastors Kelm and Schneider of Brookfield, Immanuel became involved. Pastor Schneider worked tirelessly as Pastor Gui's mentor, and the congregation began to support him financially.

It didn't end there. Now it was Pastor Gui who could not help but speak about what he had learned. His own members began to share their Lutheran faith with family and friends in the Congo, and missions began to spring up there. You came to us as a small group, and by God's grace you have grown to close to 100 people in worship and Sunday School on a Sunday. You have reached out to many new immigrants, including many who are Muslim. Pastor Gui is always looking for new opportunities to share the Gospel. I overheard him asking a college student who was interviewing him whether she had a church. When she said "No," he was not shy to invite her. While so many of us life-long Lutherans take Luther's *Small Catechism* for granted, Pastor Gui has taught us what a treasure it is. When a young Hmong Vicar from Minnesota, shared some of his frustrations in the ministry last weekend, Pastor Gui's response was to simply teach the catechism, and people will responde. When I consider this congregation and pastor, I think of people who know that they have a message to share with this city and our world.

II. What is the message that we cannot help but share with this world?

It is that our Savior is risen from the dead. Paul writes in verses 14 that God raised Christ from the dead. He died on the cross and was buried. The hopes of all those who followed Him were dashed. But Christ rose from the dead on the 3rd day. His resurrection is the proof that He paid for all of our sins on the cross of Calvary. We look at our own lives, and we see so much sin and shame, but Christ bore all of our sins and shame on the cross. He died with the words, "It is finished." Every sin was paid for in full. We rejoice in the forgiveness of sins in His name through His victorious death and resurrection for us. Our Savior lives!

We shall live with Him. Paul writes, "We know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence." As Christians we have already died to sin and have been raised to a new life through our Baptism into Christ. One day we

³ *At Home in the House of my Fathers*, page 564

will all die physically. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death, but then it says that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. On the last day when Christ returns, He will raise every one of us. Through faith in Christ we have the sure hope of everlasting life with our Lord in His glory. We will be with the Lord, both body and soul for all of eternity. Today this verse has special significance for us. Pastor Gui was so looking forward to sharing this day with his mother, but our Lord called her to Himself just a couple of weeks ago. But we know that her spirit and the spirit of all of those who have known Christ are now with the Lord, and that the last day we will all rise to everlasting life. In Christ we have the gift that everyone craves, eternal life.

We thank God that He can even use us to extend His kingdom in this world. Paul writes in verse 15 that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Paul writes earlier in verse 7 that we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We look at ourselves and sometimes wonder, “What can I do for God?” But when we trust in God’s mercy and grace for us in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit makes us into His instruments. His strong mighty arm takes hold of our weak trembling hands, and does much more than we could have ever imagined. When we think of how God has already blessed the ministry of your pastor and the mission of this congregation, we cannot help but give God thanks and praise for all of His blessings.

At the beginning of my sermon, I shared a little about the founding of the LC-MS and its early growth. In closing I would like to quote from a mission sermon by Dr. George Stoeckhardt, one of the early professors of our synod. These words also seem to apply well to your ministry and congregation,

Wonderful! Our work appears to us to be patchwork and piecemeal. Our work often appears to be without plan and without goal. We do mission work according to no set plan. As occasion demands and the case may be and whatever the circumstances, we send preachers once in this direction, once in that direction. But through all these contingencies the Lord is carrying out his eternal plan. Out of this patchwork a whole is formed under God's guiding hand. Thus the church is perfected. Yes, a miracle before our very eyes and an occasion for great joy! ... And the Lord our God, may he be kind to us and continue to promote the labor of our hands among us. Yes, the work of our hands, may he accomplish it! Amen.⁴

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⁴*Homiletical Aids, Sermons, Sermon Studies, Outlines*, vol 2, George Stöckhardt, page 292