

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 10/23/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, October 24 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, continue to pray for the people of the Middle East and for all who have suffered loss over the recent actions in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Pray for comfort for those who grieve and/or are suffering injury or loss of home. Ask GOD that avenues for peace and justice might be found and that all GOD'S people throughout the world might be treated with the goodness that GOD offers.*

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Martin Luther was passionate about finding ways to help the average person connect with GOD. Among the things he did was to write hymns based on familiar tavern melodies. When asked why he was using “that” music for church hymns, Luther replied, “Why should the devil have all the good music?”

One of the most important contributions he made toward this effort to give people greater access to GOD was to translate the Bible into German. Prior to that, the Bible was only written in Hebrew (the Old Testament), Greek (the New Testament), and Latin (a translation of the Hebrew and the Greek). Thus, even if you could read, you wouldn't be able to read the Bible if you didn't know those other scholarly languages. After refusing to recant his writings before the emperor in 1521, Luther was taken into hiding at the Wartburg Castle. For ten months, Luther translated the New Testament from Greek, with a Latin translation as a reference, into the German language—the first time the Bible was available to the common reader. Not only did Luther's translation make the Bible accessible to all German readers, it served as the basis for unifying the German dialects that existed at the time. Today, the German language spoken is the result of Luther's translation of the New Testament.

But consider if you were a worshiper prior to Luther's translation. You would only know what the Bible said as told to you by your priests. You would have no way of confirming the accuracy of this information, though most priests sought to render the scriptures faithfully. But the meaning of the scriptures was not up for debate. You were told what it meant and you had no basis to argue. Luther, as an Augustinian monk and professor of theology and biblical studies at Whittenburg Seminary was able to read the biblical texts. His study led him to question some of the centuries-old teachings of the church. His writings challenging these teachings led to the demand in 1521 that he recant or take back his writings. His response that he would only recant what was shown to be in error of the basis of scripture is what led to the Reformation that we commemorate this week.

We are blessed to have full access to GOD'S Word today. Few of us, if any, consider what a wonderful gift it is to be able to read and study the Bible, and to ask questions on what we read. Often, we come to church and the text is read to us, and then we are told what it means without much consideration of whether that is what GOD really intended. Hopefully, those sharing these things do so in faithful interpretation of those texts, taking into consideration their context and meaning in the overall message of Scripture. But each of us has the opportunity, thanks to Luther, and the responsibility to seek to understand the meaning of GOD'S Word for each of our lives. The Bible in our own language is indeed a great gift and we should not take that blessing of that gift lightly.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey