



Reformation Sunday

October 25, 2020

Introduction

Rooted in the past and growing into the future, the church must always be reformed in order to live out the love of Christ in an ever-changing world. We celebrate the good news of God's grace, that Jesus Christ sets us free every day to do this life-transforming work. Trusting in the freedom given to us in baptism, we pray for the church, that Christians will unite more fully in worship and mission.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity one God,

Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit,
who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**
Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Faithful God, **have mercy on us.**

**We confess that we are captive to sin
and cannot free ourselves.**

**We turn from your loving embrace
and go our own ways.**

**We pass judgment on one another
before examining ourselves.**

We place our own needs before those of our neighbors.

We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves.

**Make us humble, cast away our transgressions,
and turn us again to life in you
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need,
and through his death and resurrection,
Christ has made us his own.

Hear the truth that God proclaims:

Your sins are forgiven in the name of ✚ Jesus Christ.

Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness
to do God's work in the world. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn ELW # 504 / LBW # 229

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The renewed covenant will not be breakable, but like the old covenant it will expect the people to live upright lives. To know the LORD means that one will defend the cause of the poor and needy (Jer. 22:16). The renewed covenant is possible only because the LORD will forgive iniquity and not remember sin. Our hope lies in a God who forgets.

Read the text [here](#).

Psalmody: Psalm 46

¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

²**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,
and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**

³though its waters rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

⁴**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.**

⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken;
God shall help it at the break of day.

⁶**The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake;
God speaks, and the earth melts away.**

⁷The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

⁸**Come now, regard the works of the LORD,
what desolations God has brought upon the earth;**

⁹behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰**“Be still, then, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”**

¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28

Paul's words stand at the heart of the preaching of Martin Luther and other Reformation leaders. No human beings make themselves right with God through works of the law. We are brought into a right relationship with God through the divine activity centered in Christ's death. This act is a gift of grace that liberates us from sin and empowers our faith in Jesus Christ.

Read the text [here](#).

Gospel: John 8:31-36

Jesus speaks of truth and freedom as spiritual realities known through his word. He reveals the truth that sets people free from sin.

Read the text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

It is Reformation Sunday, a festival celebration of change.

Jeremiah was written for Jewish people who were exiles from the Promised Land. During this time, the Jewish people did not have access to the temple or the synagogues. They did not have the ability to teach their youth or to celebrate their festivals as they had in the past. According to one scholar, it is theorized that it was difficult to gather for basic worship. Sound familiar?

Jeremiah gives a mini Gospel. The new covenant he describes provides a hope of Good News, a promise of mercy and love. Jeremiah states that the law will be written on their hearts. Each person, no matter their status, will know God and God's law.

A side note here: the law that is being referred to is the Mosaic Law given at Mt Sinai, not the dietary and other laws that came later. The commandments that lead us to love God and lead us to love one another by example.

Writing the law on the heart of each person is a gift from God to the people of Israel. It is an individual gift, yet it is also a gift to the community. God walks with Israel through their struggles and reforms their practices to give them what they need. God reaches through the tough times and the pain to give them what is needed.

Just like God does now. Various congregations and faith groups are having to do things in a new manner. There are outdoor services. There are restrictions on attendance at indoor worship. There are various kinds of services recorded and delivered by mass media. Great changes, maybe a mini reform. Yet God still walks with us.

God is still speaking to us through various means. We can still worship God. We can still give thanks for the gift of faith that God has given us. We can still come to God with our concerns and needs.

The Holy Spirit is still at work helping us to find different ways of being together. Some of these new methods may stay after Covid. Maybe the Holy Spirit is leading us through another reformation as the Spirit did with Martin Luther. Back in the 1500s, the use of the printing press and the bible in the vernacular were all the new, modern, odd things to people. Just like Zoom is for us today.

I know it is a little scary and odd. I am a life-long Lutheran, and that is a strong part of my identity. Just like some of the folks in Jeremiah and in the Gospel readings, I would love to go back to the old style of service, the way it was in my youth. However, my being a life-long Lutheran does not save me any more than being a descendant of Abraham would save the folks in the gospel. God is our source of salvation, of hope, of what we put our trust in.

Today's readings from Jeremiah and John are a call to return to God. To have faith in God. To trust that God loves us. Through faith in Christ, we will be okay. Happy, healthy, stress free? That is not promised, yet we will be free in Christ.

As the Son of God, Christ has opened a door for us to be reconciled to God. Christ breaks the bondage of sin and gives us a promise of being the children of God. Christ as the Son, has the authority to give us a special place in God's world. A place to have faith and be loved by God, even in this chaos. To be reformed into what God wants us to be.

So have faith. The Triune God keeps his covenants, or promises, to us. God walks with us through life. Through the Holy Spirit, we are continuously led back to Christ's redemption and to God the Father claiming us as his.

As we remember the Reformation that led to the formation of our church, let us also celebrate the gift of God reforming us on a daily basis. God is making us new each day, loving us as he always has and always will. Thanks be to God! Amen

Hymn of the Day ELW # 517 / LBW # 230

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Your Word

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

Renew and inspire the church in the freedom of the gospel, O God. Where the church is in error, reform it. Where the church speaks your truth, strengthen it. Where the church is divided, unify it. Ignite in us the working of the Holy Spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As the earth changes, as mountains shake and the waters roar, may we care for this planet as a holy habitation for all living things. Sustain all peoples and lands recovering from natural disasters of any kind especially earthquakes, hurricanes, and wildfires.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Guide areas of the world divided or traumatized by conflict, especially in our own land. Free all from slavery and human trafficking, and protect all in harm's way. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Release those living in bondage to debts, chronic pain, or addiction. Grant healing to those who are ill, especially those we name now. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In this family of faith we give thanks for courageous voices that have remained firm in their commitment to the one who frees us from sin and death. Centered in your grace, unify us in the hope of the gospel. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Even in death, you free us and give us a place in your house. We give thanks for our ancestors who have shown us truth and freedom, especially Martin Luther and those who work for the renewal of the church. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 511 / LBW # 233

Thy Strong Word

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Worship adapted from sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS027356.

Today's reflection was written by Vicar Mike Lang.