



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,
Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, one God,
whose teaching is life, whose presence is sure,
and whose love is endless. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins to the one who welcomes us with an open heart.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God our comforter:

like lost sheep, we have gone astray.

We gaze upon abundance and see scarcity.

We turn our faces away from injustice and oppression.

We exploit the earth with our apathy and greed.

Free us from our sin, gracious God.

Listen when we call out to you for help.

Lead us by your love to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

By the gift of grace in ✝ Christ Jesus, God makes you righteous.

Receive with glad hearts the forgiveness of all your sins. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn ELW # 652/LBW # 365

Built on a Rock

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 complete text [here](#).

Psalm: 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 complete 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 complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

In looking back, I find that most years on Reformation Sunday, I preach on one of the texts assigned, usually Romans or John. Both are favorite texts and I have found them to be very meaningful, as well as the Jeremiah text on which I have preached a time or two. But the Psalm is what caught my eye this year – a text that I am not sure I have ever preached on.

This is a wonderful Psalm, and of course, for us Lutherans on this Reformation Day, it is a text we know well, although more in the sung form of Martin Luther's hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. In researching this Psalm, I find it interesting that in the many, many words Luther wrote and the many texts of which he wrote sermons or commentaries, Psalm 46 does not appear to be one that he wrote about other than the hymn itself. But many others have written about it, so they have provided much source material for this sermon.

Psalm 46 is labeled both a temple psalm, praising Zion, and a trust psalm, praising God. Most scholars that I read seem to agree that it is a psalm of trust, and for Luther, if you read carefully the words of his hymn, also agreed that this is a psalm, or hymn, of trust – of trust in God.

The Psalm begins very clearly with the statement that “God is our refuge and strength.” No matter what troubles lay before us; no matter what troubles show up on the nightly news; no matter what the headlines of the day – “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” From this statement, I am reminded of other hymns such as *Standing on the Promise*, *Eternal Father, Strong to Save*, and *Thy Strong Word*.

These are hymns of promise, hymns that remind us that God has promised to be with us always, in every time of trouble.

While the psalm does speak of the “city,” it is not specific about which city – Zion? Jerusalem? It only tells us that it is the city of God. And while many consider Zion the City of God, the Psalm does not say that. It is only a reminder that God is our only true defense – not any city or its fortifications or defense systems – it is the reminder that “The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.”

Rather than depending on our ourselves, our technology, our firepower, this Psalm helps to remind us that only God can protect us from the forces of evil. For those who would build higher fences and buy more guns, they will never be enough. Our faith, our trust, is in a higher power than earthly defenses. That is our refuge and strength.

When times are tough, and we are not sure where to turn; when it seems that everything is falling apart; rather than building bigger defensive systems and trusting in ourselves, we are better served by listening to verse 10 “Be still, then, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”

By letting God be God, and by placing our trust and faith in God, we can remove our worries and remember that, “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.”

Martin Luther frames it this way in his hymn, ‘No strength of ours can match his might...He holds the field victorious. God’s Word forever shall abide...the kingdom is ours forever.

Be still, and let God be God. Know that God’s word, God’s promise will abide forever, and that “God is our refuge and strength” – forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 517/LBW #230 *Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Nicene Creed

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

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Set free from sin and death and nourished by the word of truth, we join in prayer for all of God's creation.

A brief silence.

We pray for all who long for a word of truth and for the radical grace that flows from the cross. Inspire congregations to freely and boldly proclaim your love for all people with persistence and hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for your creation, for mountains, rivers, streams, cities, homesteads, and neighborhoods. Write in our hearts a new love and care for creation. Give us the will to curb wasteful habits and to hold accountable those who neglect the vulnerable. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who aspire to public office and for all who will vote on Tuesday at local polling places. Pour wisdom and understanding upon all who govern so that communities of justice and peace may thrive. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who long for healing in mind, body, or spirit especially those we name now. Strengthen hospitals, clinics, counseling centers, nursing homes, and recovery centers to be holy spaces of renewal that all might live the abundant life you intend. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who seek to grow in faith and love of you. Guide teaching and learning in confirmation, small groups, Sunday school, youth groups, schools, seminaries, and universities. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for all the saints and reformers who have gone before us who dwell in your holy habitation. Give us courage through their example to challenge unjust systems and work toward life-giving reformation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Confident that you hear us, O God, we boldly place our prayers into your hands; through Jesus Christ, our truth and life. **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 # ELW # 504 / LBW # 229

A Mighty Fortress

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.