

## Reformation

King of Glory Lutheran Church - Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Reformation Texts: Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ps 46, Romans 3:19-28, John 8:31-36

October 29-30, 2022

<sup>31</sup>Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” <sup>33</sup>They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?”

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup>The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:31-36

Beloved of God, grace and peace and truth and freedom be with you this day through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Martin Luther was a priest – a monk – who desired to change his church, the Catholic church. Back in those days, there was no Twitter, no Face Book, no newspapers yet. The church door was the place for posts. Rev. Luther – as the story goes – nailed his 95 complaints to the door. So, when did your blog post earn a papal rebuttal?

Yesterday at Trinity Lutheran Church, a new young pastor was installed; her name is Kaari Nieuwlandt. It was fabulous to witness and support a pastor at the outset of her career. She is excited, bold and ready to share the Good News of Christ. As I worshipped it made me think of Rev. Martin Luther.

He too, was excited – changed to his very core by the Gospel. As he read Romans 1:16-17 he “felt himself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”

Listen to the passage: For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it (the Gospel – God’s Word) the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

Luther continued, “The whole of scripture took on a new meaning....this passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.”

Luther understood that it is by God alone that we alone are made right. We cannot save ourselves. Our works – what we do, cannot and do not save us! It is only by God's grace and mercy do we live at all...in this world and the next.

That divine moment of understanding through the Holy Spirit, changed Luther's life and changed, ultimately the Church.

Oh, it was not change for change's sake. It was a Holy Spirit Reforming of the church as Luther and all his predecessors knew it. Most of them didn't like it.

We know change, don't we? In fact, these days, change happens so quickly that we barely blink, and seismic shifts occur. In technology, artificial intelligence, medical science, migration, creation, and nations status, change is happening at rapid pace.

Think about that while listening to a quote from Rev. Katherine Lewis, just barely four years ago about the Church who has a much harder time changing.

“Don't misunderstand me. When I say that that church needs a reformation, I am not talking about securing the answer to declining membership, fixing lukewarm denominationalism, or solving the dilemma of closing churches. I am not talking about how to overhaul lower attendance problems, how to answer where have all the young people gone, how to ensure that the future is the children. I am not talking about how to attract new members, get more seminarians enrolled in theological education, or write better strategic plans. This is all a backward looking kind of reformation, a nostalgia for what once was reformation, a reformation that defaults to entrenchment, giving in to fear in the face of those who feign a confidence they don't really have.”

“Maintaining the status quo is not the nature of the church. The Gospel upends that which has been streamlined and that which has been deemed acceptable by the masses. The Gospel demands to be heard even when rejection is sure to be the response.....The church desperately needs a ... reformation with courage and heart at its center, that doesn't sit there silently...insisting that the Gospel word is the liberating word that might truly save the world.” Karoline Lewis 10/22/18 (<https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/reformers-in-our-midst>)

What do you think of that? The church needs a reformation that insists the Gospel word is the liberating word that might truly save the world. It's what Luther

knew! It's what God had revealed to him through the Holy Spirit. The Gospel is the only word which can bring true life.

We live in a moment in time where a certain percentage of the world believes that death rules the day. That there is no real meaning in life, no hope in life, no reason to act on principle or integrity because at the end of the day, it's all about yourself. Live for the moment and get as much as you can. As Lutheran Christians, we believe nothing of the sort! Amen?

Look to the wall on your right. Jeanette Williams and Debbie Kunkel have sewn for this congregation a beautiful reminder of Reformation Day, October 31, 1517. Martin Luther designed Luther's Rose in 1520 as a summary of his faith. The rose represents the purity of God's grace, and the cross the redeeming power of Jesus Christ in his blood.

(slide)The five solas state that Christians are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. Let's say those together:

Sola scriptura: scripture alone

Sola Fide: faith alone

Solus Christus: Christ alone

Sola Gratia: grace alone

Soli Deo Gloria: for the glory of God alone!

People of God, I try hard to not make fun of the church – we have enough struggles as it is. Thus, I want to commend you, I hardly ever hear within these walls that old church adage, “We’ve never done it that way before.” I don’t think I’ve ever heard, “We tried that once and it failed.”

That's because the Holy Spirit is alive here! Praise God.

Now, we too, King of Glory is talking about attendance and offerings. We are at a moment in time where we could walk in fear and live in the church of the past. I'm more and more convinced, that church is gone. Do we know what we are to be and look like? God will reveal it for certain! If you had told me during seminary, that I would support Holy Communion to be served in an on-line forum, I would have thought you crazy. Now we realize what God already knew. God is Spirit, and those who worship God, worship in Spirit and truth. To those of you watching and receiving Holy Communion on-line, you are part of this body of faith, and we, you.

Like Luther, we can boldly walk forward in faith; trusting the Holy Spirit to show us the next right step. It will come as we trust surely in God's Word, in Christ who saves all people, within whom we are saved by faith through grace, to God be the glory!

The reformation which began by Martin Luther making public his convictions about who the church could be, began with the spark of the divine. The Holy Spirit, the divine spark of grace, does and will continue to move the church forward as God desires. Our response, is to continue in that Gospel that we dare to believe can change us and change the world. Amen!