

## **Reformation**

### **October 25, 2020**

#### Jeremiah 31:31-34

<sup>31</sup>“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup>not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup>For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

#### Psalms 46

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength,\*

a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,\*

and though the mountains be toppled into the depths | of the sea;

<sup>3</sup> though its waters | rage and foam,\*

and though the mountains tremble | at its tumult.

<sup>4</sup> The LORD of | hosts is with us;\*

the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.

<sup>5</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,\*

the holy habitation of | the Most High.

<sup>6</sup> God is in the midst of her; she shall not be | overthrown;\*

God shall help her at the | break of day.

<sup>7</sup> The nations make much ado, and the kingdoms are shaken;\*

God has spoken, and the earth shall | melt away.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD of | hosts is with us;\*

the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.

<sup>9</sup> Come now and look upon the works | of the LORD,\*

what awesome things he has | done on earth.

<sup>10</sup> It is he who makes war to cease in | all the world;\*

he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the | shields  
with fire.

<sup>11</sup> "Be still, then, and know that | I am God;\*

I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted | in the earth."

<sup>12</sup> The LORD of | hosts is with us;\*

the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.

### Romans 3:19-28

<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being<sup>[c]</sup> will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

### John 8:31-36

<sup>31</sup> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." <sup>33</sup> They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave<sup>[b]</sup> to sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

### **Reformation Sunday October 25, 2020**

#### Message: How Do We Hear It?

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; 8.32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

How do you hear that? What do you hear? Law, or gospel? Is Jesus warning, threatening us, or is he giving us a promise? Because, in reality, when Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples," he was also in effect saying, "If you do not continue in my word, then you are truly not my disciples."

So, what do you hear?

Let's try the same story a slightly different way...

There once was a Dad that said to his children, "If you eat the meals I present you, you'll be truly healthy; and you'll have energy and energy will make you strong."

One of the children listened and realized what a wonderful gift Dad was giving them. There would always be food for them – they wouldn't have to go looking for it.

The food would be nutritious and healthy. They would never need to worry that it might be just junk food, or that it would actually be something that was intended for the dog or cat.

They heard the words of the Dad as a word of reassurance, of promise; something they could depend on.

And with that promise ringing in their ears, they eagerly looked forward to every meal. They anticipated with excitement the plate that would be presented to them at their next meal. What has Dad prepared this time? Would it be one of their favorites? Would it be familiar flavors on their tongue or would it be something new, different – maybe a little on the wild, exotic side? And they could hardly wait to get to the table!

Years later, looking back they realized that not everything had been to their liking. Some things had a taste that was a bit bitter, some puckered their mouths up, some was so spicy it made their eyes water. But Dad's promise had come true! They had indeed, grown up healthy! They thrived; they had energy, and that energy had enabled them to do all sorts of things.

And they thanked their Dad every day for his promise and his provision.

But the other child, hearing the same words, reacted very differently. Instead of gift and promise, they heard from their Father words of restriction, warning and impending punishment! "What if we don't eat? What then? What are you going to do about it? Force feed us? Stuff that nasty tasting stuff down our throats?"

"No, said Dad. "But if you don't eat, you won't be healthy. If you refuse to go without food long enough, you will become sick. You won't have energy to ward off disease; your immune system will be compromised. If you persist, eventually you will die. Please, come to the table!"

But the children still rebelled. "You don't really love us! You don't give us what we want! We know of other foods – Twinkies and Ho-Ho's, candy bars and sodas. That's the kind of food we want. What do you mean we'll become sick? We see other children eating those and we want them, too! We haven't been sick a day! Those kids have lots of energy!"

"No," said Dad. "I know you – I know what your bodies require. I know about your food allergies and vitamin deficiencies. I will give you what you really need. Please, come to the table!"

But the children refused. And so it was that some of the children wandered away from the table in search of things more to their liking. And in time, some grew thin and malnourished. They came down with colds, fevers and the flu. And, in spite of the Father's warning, some ultimately starved to death, for everything he told them was true.

And the Father wept over their graves.

Jesus said, "If you continue in my Word, you are truly my disciples."

How do we hear that? Do we hear it as the promise that discipleship, belonging to the Lord of the universe is ours for as long we want it? Or do we hear it differently? Do we at once begin to suspiciously ask, "Yeah? Well, what if I don't continue in your word? What do you mean, 'continue'? Are you saying coming to church a couple times a month isn't good enough for you? Suppose I don't do that...What then? Are you saying I'm no longer a disciple? Is that it? Are you saying you are going to kick me out?"

Jesus said, "And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free!"

How do we hear that? Do we hear the promise that true release from all that binds our souls, freedom, is winging its way to us in the truth, in Word and Sacrament? Or do we at once begin to suspiciously ask, "Yeah? Well, what is truth, anyway? What if I don't believe it's true – what then?"

Jesus said, "If you commit sin, you are in bondage to sin."

How we you hear that? Do we hang your head in repentance and confess that you are indeed in bondage to sin and cannot free yourself? Or do we at once begin to suspiciously ask, "Yeah? Well, what are you calling sin? I don't think what I'm doing is such a big deal! I mean, it's not like I'm out killing people and robbing banks! What are you saying? What are you going to do? Throw me in chains? Tie me up? Make me some kind of slave?"

And what happens when we discover that everything Jesus said, regardless of how we heard them, warning or promise, both law or gospel, both were true all along?

We are in bondage, but if the Son of God frees us with his truth, we are free indeed.

Thanks be to God!

## **Prayers of the Church, Reformation Sunday – October 25, 2020**

In the power of the Spirit, let us pray to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the world, the Church, and one another.

*A brief silence is kept.*

Heavenly Father, thank you for the faith and zeal of reformers who sought to recover or preserve the precious pearl of great price, the Gospel of salvation. Thank you for all the faithful people in every land and every age who have preferred nothing whatsoever to Christ Jesus, and him crucified. Keep us in their company, and keep our faith warm and pure through the life-giving fire of your most Holy Spirit.

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

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon your Church. Make it your holy habitation. Keep it steadfast in your Word. Strengthen it in the face of temptation. Defend it from evil. Reform and purify it from sin and error. And bestow on it your saving peace.

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

Be the refuge and strength of Christians who are persecuted for confessing Jesus as Lord. Cause the enemies of the Gospel to repent of their sinfulness, that they may turn to you and live.

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

Graciously protect and guide the people of this congregation, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Gladden our hearts with the joy of your saving love. Cause us to brim over with the gifts of your Holy Spirit, so that we may refresh, nourish, instruct, and invite our neighbors into your presence.

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

Bless the work of those faithful theologians and teachers who establish dialog, clarify doctrine, correct misunderstandings, and strive to heal the fractures within your Church. Direct their labors with your Spirit's wise promptings. Give them holy charity in service of witnessing to the truth of your holy Word. And keep their hearts and their work centered in the Gospel of your Son, Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected to forgive our sins and to grant life and salvation to all who will receive him.

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

We long for you to break the bow, shatter the spear, and make war to cease throughout the world. Until that day, we pray that you would strengthen, protect, and guide all who risk their life on our behalf. Be their very present help in times of trouble and places of danger; prosper all they do that accomplishes your will; and bring them home safely and soon.

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

Exalt yourself among the nations, and speak your holy word to the leaders of the world. Establish among all peoples that peace which the world cannot give; and teach us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before you.

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

We lift before you the needs of all whose lives are shaken and troubled by suffering of mind, body, or spirit. Especially we pray for the VansCoy family, Mary and Dallas Rathe, Johnnie and Marilyn Feulner, Marilyn Fredrick, Mary Ann Stegen, Mary Ann Helmrich, and Pr. Mel Harris. Be in their midst; let them not be overthrown; bring them your saving help; say to them, 'be still, and know that I am God;' and restore them all to health and hope, that they may proclaim the awesome things you have done.

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

Holy Father, thank you for the lives of all your faithful people: prophets, apostles, and martyrs; theologians and confessors, teachers and pastors. This morning we especially give you thanks for you servant Bishop Paull Spring. Grace his family with your presence and sustain them in their time of loss and sorrow. Grant that we may follow in the footsteps of your saints; boldly trust in your promises; faithfully live in your Word; and cheerfully serve in your Name. Bring us, through the merits of our Savior, into your eternal home, where with all the redeemed, we shall glorify you in the power of your most holy Spirit forever and ever and unto the ages of ages.

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