

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who taught us how to have a discerning heart by his love for us, Jesus our Savior and Lord, amen.

Today is Reformation Sunday. This is a Sunday when we celebrate the work and lives of Martin Luther and other reformers—saints of the Church. It's also a time when we celebrate the reforming work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in our lives. The Holy Spirit is constantly working in our lives, giving us wisdom, and helping us to understand all the things our Lord Jesus Christ said and taught during His earthly ministry. Through confession, repentance and forgiveness, the Spirit transforms our lives and changes the Church. What a perfect day to reaffirm our Baptismal promises, not just for our dear brother in Christ Robbie Arling, but for each and every one of us. In Martin Luther's time, the Church had lost its way. In the Reformation, the Church regained its focus on proclaiming the truth that we are saved by grace through faith and this is a gift of God, not the result of our good works. In today's lesson about Solomon, we see another truth displayed that was uncovered during the Reformation. The truth is that we are at the same time both sinners and saints.

Solomon followed his father David and ruled over the united kingdom of Israel. He ruled during Israel's golden age. Israel reached its farthest borders and became a very rich nation. The historian of 1 Kings portrays Solomon in a positive light. He is very religious and offers thousands of burnt offerings. He asks for

wisdom—a good request, but is also given riches. He demonstrates his wisdom in the story of two women and one child. The Lord used Solomon to accomplish great things for God’s people. Solomon, however, strayed away from the Lord. His hundreds of wives seduced him into the worship of other Gods. Solomon raised taxes to such a high level, they were a burden on the people. Just a few decades after settling into the promised land where God had freed them from the yolk of slavery in Egypt, Solomon introduced slavery and forced labor onto the people of God. Eventually, his actions, while making him very rich and powerful, destroyed the kingdom and split the people of God. Solomon was at the same time a sinner and a saint. He had been given every blessing from the same God who had utterly defeated the Egyptian armies and the armies of every other enemy of Israel as well. Rather than following God’s Word and continuing to receive God’s unmerited blessing, Solomon forgot all those lessons and instead lived according to the values and standards of the world rather than the values of God’s Kingdom. Solomon wasn’t unique in his forgetfulness of God and God’s Commandments. Nor was he unique in that God used Solomon to do great things to advance God’s Kingdom on earth despite his obvious shortfalls.

Throughout the Scriptures God uses men and women who are at the same time saints and sinners. Last Sunday we learned how God used David who was probably a rapist and certainly a murderer and an adulterer. God used Moses who

was also a murderer. God used Peter who denied Jesus and Paul who persecuted Christians. Though we are tempted to make Martin Luther out to be larger than life and almost sinless, he was far from that. In the 1990's parts of the Lutheran Church formally apologized to the Jews for Luther's anti-Jewish tirades. Luther's writings were fuel on the fire of the hatred that resulted in the holocaust. Luther also turned against the peasants and supported the royalty in the struggles that were part of the Reformation. This truth is displayed over and over again throughout history. Though we are made saints at our baptism and are holy in God's eyes, we are still human with the capacity to sin.

Here's your good news alert for today! God hasn't left us nor is God plotting to wipe us out by any means. God solved our problem of Sin once and for all times by what Jesus Christ accomplished in his life, death and resurrection. We have been cleansed from our sins, given new life, adopted as God's children, and filled with the Holy Spirit all thanks to Jesus Christ. In response to what God has done in our lives, we strive to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves. God has done great things through us. Lives have been touched and changed by the power of God's love and grace that people have experienced through our words and actions. And the news alert keeps on getting better and better... Hear this people of God here at Trinity and those listening in on line... God will continue to great things through you. I know that

makes me feel both special and humble... Before we start thinking how good we must be for God to choose to use us for His Holy purpose, let's remember who and what we are... Please don't be offended when I say, we are not perfect—not a single one of us. We are sinful beings, and our sinfulness will be expressed. We will say and do things that will cause us shame, guilt and embarrassment. We will hurt other people. Despite our penchant for sin, God does not condemn us. The Holy Spirit continuously offers us the path of confession, repentance, forgiveness and new life.

Today, Robbie will stand up and speak for himself regarding the promises that were made for him when he was just a baby. Those promises are: To live among God's faithful people: To hear his Word and share in his supper: To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed: To serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus: To strive for justice and peace in all the earth. Robbie, it's not going to be easy to live out these 5 promises you will make to God today. You will break all 5 of them at some time in your life. If you learned nothing else from me during these years of your Catechism, I pray you learned this. Making promises is fine, but what makes us saints in the eyes of our God has nothing to do with how well you keep these promises and everything to do with God's gift of His Holy and precious Spirit that was given to you in your Baptism. It's that Spirit that gives you the discernment to know when and how to

keep these promises and that same spirit that calls you back when you stray from them. It's God's love and God's mercy, and God's Grace that makes you his Holy and beautiful Saint, not how well you keep these promises... You're making these 5 promises out of thankfulness and from a grateful heart for all God has done through Jesus Christ for you. Out of that full and grateful heart flow God's love through you to your neighbor, into a world sorely and sadly so much in need of God's love...

Today we celebrate. Every day can be a day of celebration. We are saved by grace through faith and not by works AND we are at the same time saints and sinners. We are people whom God has chosen to work in and through in order to spread God's kingdom of love and grace. Today Robert Luke Arling joins all the Saints of God as a fellow worker with us spreading this tremendous Good News to all the world. Thanks be to God for His gift of Jesus, and for the coming of God's Holy Spirit living in each of our hearts. Amen