

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.

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says 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.

³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Psalm 46

¹God is our ref- | uge 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 cit- | y 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 up- | on 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.

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.

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

²¹But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, ²³since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

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.

³¹Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

³³They 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’?”

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

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray...

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, saying "God, in your mercy," and responding, "hear our prayer."

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. God, 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. God, 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. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Release those living in bondage to debts, chronic pain, or addiction. Grant healing touch to those who are ill (*especially those who we name now, either silently on our hearts, or aloud...* [pause]). God, 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. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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. God, 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.



Gloria Dei
LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Reformation Day reflection from Dr Dirk Lange (Lutheran World Federation)...

Today, many churches are inheritors of the Reformation and are called into an ongoing reformation (*ecclesia semper reformanda est*). Churches are called to constant renewal, always open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help understand and respond to contemporary challenges, continually translating the Gospel into new contexts, deeply aware of the thirst of people for peace, justice, and reconciliation.

The readings often used on Reformation Day (Jeremiah, Psalm 46, Romans 3, John 8) call us into this task of translation. Preaching on these texts today could focus on the Gospel call to continually deconstruct walls in a world that wishes to build them. The Gospel challenge is huge.

Every system, every culture, every community risks succumbing to the temptation of shutting borders and protecting an identity. Brick by brick, wall by wall, suspicion by suspicion, communities want to secure their own identity, rights and freedom without thinking of their neighbor. Very quickly "truth" becomes something we possess over and against others rather than a call that sets us on a journey toward communion.

Psalm 46 continually reminds us that "truth" is not in our definitions but in God. "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble." It directs our attention not to our power and ability but to God's present and the dismantling of all power. Be still, that is, let go, abandon, desist, cease. Our hope is directed not toward our self-invented plans and schemes nor is it directed upwards toward a transcendent God far-off in some heavenly realm. Our hope is in God who dwells among us, in the struggle of our neighbors. God-with-us. Jesus Christ.

(Found at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?m=4377&post=4736>)