

## **Sunday, October 30, 2022 – Reformation Sunday**

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### **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.

### **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.*

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It 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. <sup>33</sup>But 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.

<sup>34</sup>No 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

<sup>1</sup>God is our ref- | uge 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 shake in the depths | of the sea;**

<sup>3</sup>though its waters | rage and foam,  
and though the mountains tremble | with its tumult.

<sup>4</sup>**There is a river whose streams make glad the cit- | y of God,  
the holy habitation of | the Most High.**

<sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of the city; it shall | not be shaken;  
God shall help it at the | break of day.

<sup>6</sup>**The nations rage, and the | kingdoms shake;  
God speaks, and the earth | melts away.**

<sup>7</sup>The LORD of | hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.

<sup>8</sup>**Come now, regard the works | of the LORD,  
what desolations God has brought up- | on the earth;**

<sup>9</sup>behold 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.

<sup>10</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>11</sup>The 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.*

<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 silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup>But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup>since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup>they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom 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; <sup>26</sup>it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

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

## 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.*

<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.”

## Prayers of Intercession

In gratitude and humility, let us join together in prayer on behalf of all of God's creation, saying "hear us, O God," and responding, "your mercy is great."

*A brief silence.*

God our fortress, we pray for the church. Write your law of love on the hearts of your people, that we remain steadfast in our witness to your grace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our liberator, we pray for your earth. Bring new life to overused land and contaminated rivers. Reform and reorient our relationship with the environment, that we faithfully care for all of your creation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God, our refuge and strength, we pray for the nations. Where they are in an uproar, bring wise leadership and comfort for those in distress. Make wars to cease and peace to enter every land. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God, our very present help in trouble, we pray for those in need. Show mercy to refugees and all fleeing from danger. Shelter any without homes. Calm all who are facing illness, surgery, or a new diagnosis (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our redeemer, we pray for our congregation. Bless all who are preparing for baptism or affirmation of baptism. Open their hearts to your Holy Spirit, teach them your word, and give them courage to proclaim their faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our stronghold, we give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith, especially Martin Luther and all reformers. Renew and reform us as we strive to continue in your word. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

With grateful hearts we commend our spoken and silent prayers to you, O God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

## ***A reflection for this Reformation Sunday...***

### Good News All Over Again

The desire to privatize the free love of God for all creation seems stamped on the human soul. While Lutherans learn early on in their faith formation about the abuses of the church through the sale of indulgences in the sixteenth century, the scriptures for Reformation Day remind us that the desire of religious people to claim ownership of what God freely gives is nothing new.

We hear the self-righteous bickering of the Israelites behind the prophet Jeremiah's declaration of a new covenant between God and humanity, one that erases any claim to special access, because we shall all know God. For the early church the question was whether there was any longer a need to observe the religious laws and customs of Israel, and the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian community. Paul reminds us that we are justified by faith in who God is, a God of grace, not by virtue of who we are.

Yet we forget this fact over and over again, like the Jews who insisted to Jesus that they had "never been slaves to anyone," forgetting their bondage in Egypt (John 8:33). We, too, lose sight of our bondage to systems of oppression and the unjust hierarchies they create. We, too, fall prey to thinking we are better or less than others because of arbitrary categories assigned to us at birth.

Reformation Day reminds us that our impulse to contain God's grace in structures of our own making cannot hold back God's determination to claim the whole world in a love as encompassing and intimate as words written on our hearts. That was good news for the Israelites in exile, for the early church in Rome, for those living during the Reformation, and for us today. Reformation Day reminds us that the words God spoke at creation when God made the world and called it good, become good news for us each time we hear them.

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