

Sunday, October 26, 2025—Reformation Sunday

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Introduction

Genuine repentance and pretentious piety stand in stark contrast in the gospel and all around us. All creation stands in need of God's forgiveness. Keep the faith. God's people shall be accounted righteous for Jesus' sake. Our God is merciful to sinners. For this we worship and glorify God forever.

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: Joel 2:23-32

²³ O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the LORD your God;
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.

²⁴ The threshing floors shall be full of grain,
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

²⁵ I will repay you for the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent against you.

²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.

²⁸ Then afterward

I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

³⁰ I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. ³² Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

Psalm 65

¹ You are to be praised, O God, in Zion;
to you shall vows be fulfilled.
² **To you, the one who answers prayer,
to you all flesh shall come.**
³ Our sins are stronger than we are,
but you blot out our transgressions.
⁴ **Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there!
They will be satisfied by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple.**
⁵ Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation,
O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the oceans far away.
⁶ **You make firm the mountains by your power;
you are girded about with might.**
⁷ You still the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves, and the clamor of the peoples.
⁸ **Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvelous signs;
you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.**
⁹ You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God
is full of water.
You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth.
¹⁰ **You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;
with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.**
¹¹ You crown the year with your goodness,
and your paths overflow with plenty.
¹² **May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing,
and the hills be clothed with joy.**
¹³ May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with
grain;
let them shout for joy and sing.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

⁶ As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

¹⁶ At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! ¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: Luke 18:9-14

⁹ [Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Prayers of Intercession

Renewed in God's everlasting grace, let us pray for the church, the world, and all creation.

A brief silence.

Free your church, O God, with grace, mercy, and love to be transformed by your word. Direct your church to be united in word and deed so that all creation knows the uniting and transforming power of the gospel. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Renew creation, O God, so that all living creatures thrive together. Guide those who work to restore and renew creation. Preserve and care for endangered species throughout the world. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Bring peace among the nations, O God, so violence and terror are not the norm on your earth. Inspire leaders of communities to work for peace and justice. Unite our politicians with a common mission and purpose. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Heal all who suffer, O God, and bring them peace. Draw near to people who are incarcerated. Give hope to people experiencing housing or employment insecurity, oppression, or discrimination. Heal those who are ill. Be our stronghold at all times. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Forgive us our sins, O God, and grant us your grace. Move us to understanding and reconciliation between people of other faiths and other Christian traditions in our community. Mend hurt feelings and heal wounds we have caused one another. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

We give you thanks, O God, for the life and witness of all your saints. Give us hope in your son's victory through the cross. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

We offer our prayers, O God, trusting in your everlasting grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Reflection

God Be Merciful

We may expect the religious insider to be blessed, the moral person to be right with God. But as is so often the case, Jesus' parable for today sweeps away conventional expectations. Jesus surprises the disciples and us when he says it's not the Pharisee but rather the tax collector, that morally suspect, second-class citizen, who goes home "justified," right with God (Luke 18:14). Here is a strong reminder for those of us who are church "insiders." We are sinners who beg for God's mercy, utterly dependent on God's forgiveness and love—not merely for ourselves but for all in God's creation.



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