

Sunday, October 29, 2023 – Reformation Sunday

www.GloriaDeiWinnipeg.org

Introduction

Jesus' summary of the law in today's gospel echoes our first reading from Leviticus. We are called not only to love God with heart, soul, and mind, but also to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is out of such deep care that Paul shares the gospel with the Thessalonian community. In the confession of sins, we acknowledge that we have not loved God, neighbor, and self; yet we gather to hear the word of forgiveness and to be strengthened by word and meal to be signs of God's love and mercy in the world.

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

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 refuge 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 city 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.

Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28

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.

Gospel: John 8:31-36

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 and introductions from
SundaysAndSeasons.com

Prayers of Intercession

Trusting in the transformative power of God's loving Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

God our parent, you call us your children and have made us siblings through your son Jesus. Heal the church's many divisions, bring understanding and peace where there has been contention and strife, and unite us in one body through the love of Christ. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our creator, your hands have made the heights of the mountains, the depths of the sea, and the life that animates all creation. Bring relief to areas harmed by wildfires, floods, storms, and human carelessness (*especially*). Renew the face of the earth. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our ruler, the nations rage and the kingdoms shake, but your word stands fast forever. Let your justice and peace roll down like waters wherever there is strife, injustice, war, or religious conflict (*especially*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our champion, you are our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble. Draw near to all who suffer (*especially*). Be their rest and comfort. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our reformer, you make all things new. Free us from complacency, open us to unexpected ways, and kindle zeal in us for the future. We pray for young people affirming their baptism. With them, stir in us a desire for your wisdom. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our savior, you made yourself known in the lives of all who have died in the hope of your grace. We give thanks for the witness of reformers like Martin Luther and for all whose example has brought us closer to you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and amazing grace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

A reflection for this Reformation Sunday

Know God, Know Ourselves

This is a Sunday packed with beautiful images, deep-seeded ideas, and a rich history. For life-long Lutherans, these things can provoke a sense of pride in our denomination, but Reformation Sunday is not "Lutheran Pride Day." Instead it is a day focused on knowing God truthfully and in the process understanding who we are as people of faith and children of God in light of God's unbelievable grace.

Luther spent a great deal of time trying to know who God was and to find ways of expressing what he came to know and believe so that others would know God too. He used coarse language, drank beer, and wrote hymns using tunes people knew and recognized. When he wrote his catechism he used language his small son could understand. He even translated the Bible into the language people spoke. Truth about God and our faith, as complex as it is, should be something we can grasp and wrestle with.

Reformation Sunday is certainly a festival day where we celebrate and remember our history, but it should also be a day to re-examine our faith. Part of that is recognizing the truth about our inadequacies, our failings, and our sinfulness. The law is like a mirror in a room with intense fluorescent lights; it shows us who we are with every flaw and wrinkle. But God doesn't look at us in that mirror. The truth about God brings us new knowledge about ourselves. God shines a new light on us, where iniquities are forgiven and sins forgotten.

The message of Reformation Sunday is God's love for us. It is a love that frees us and redefines us as people of God and as members of the whole body of Christ. In God's eyes, we are beautiful.



Gloria Dei
LUTHERAN CHURCH