



“Simply Lutheran: Only Word”

Reformation Sunday
Saturday and Sunday, October 28 and 29, 2017
All Services
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Romans 3:19-28; Psalm 46; John 8:31-36

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are times when I find myself listening to the radio, especially the oldies station and I have to admit, I'm really offended. Because the oldies now seem to be the new songs that I used to listen to when I was growing up and when I hear them I harken back to those times. When my mother had her first car, it didn't even have a radio and so we had to make our own entertainment, and so I would whistle the song *"Rain Drops Keep Falling on Your Head,"* you know that one [whistles] And then there was that song when I was in ninth grade I got up enough courage to ask the prettiest girl in the school to dance and the song was *"Sailing"* you know that song? *"Sailing, take me away from. . . ."* Just transports you back into time, doesn't it? All those great memories. I guess we all do that to a certain extent, right? We look back at those times of history or our life and wonder whether or not in some way is there a way to preserve them or at least can we just recapture them if only for a moment. And so, we use phrases like "Ahh, remember when." For some of us it's wishing for those carefree days of when we were in college and our parents paid for everything, for still others, it's just a simpler time when decisions were made for us when we were children. Or perhaps it's wondering if life would have been a little bit different if maybe we didn't waste opportunities that were presented to us. Or in the words of Uncle Rico from the movie *"Napoleon Dynamite"* *"If only the coach put me in the game, the fourth quarter we would have been state champions and I could have gone pro."*

And sometimes we wonder why can't the church be more like it used to be? When the pews were full, the offerings were plenty, the children were quiet, relatively quiet, and there were volunteers for everything that needed to be done.

We mourn the loss of what was, when we thought things were maybe "simpler" or "better." Now, of course maybe some of this is selective amnesia. If we look back into the 1950's most of us think of the great rise of rock and roll, but at the same time our children were going under their desks and having atom bomb drills. Or in the 1960's with the Beatles, there were revolutions going on all over the world. Some of them were civil, some of them were sexual, some of them were just plain old let's take out guns and shoot at each other. And of course, the 70's political turmoil, the gas lines and dare I say Disco. It always seems better back then, back there. And I have to admit in my own life I look back with rose-colored glasses when I think of all of my kids under one roof in my house, and how easily I have forgotten about the sibling arguments and the late nights with broken curfews.

In our gospel reading Jesus is teaching during the Festival of Tabernacles. He said to those who were coming to believe in him, if you continue in my word you will be in my disciple you will know

truth and the truth will give you freedom, real freedom. Those early disciples who hear him and take offense of that; "What do you mean Jesus, we are free, we were never slaves?" Now what's interesting about that is that particular festival commemorates their escape from slavery when they were in Egypt. As a matter of fact, the Jews had been slaves. . . multiple times through their history. They don't know who they are or where they come from. They have some selective amnesia.

But the freedom that Jesus was talking about here was not political freedom, it was not being free from the Romans or free from the Egyptians, what he was saying to them is you are free to become a servant. To accept the teaching that he is offering, to obey it with your whole heart, and to place God first in all things.

Jesus wanted for his disciples to abide in him. And we abide in Christ when we place ourselves in him, in the body, in the church, to live with him, growing together in faith and spirit, drawing from his words. If you know him, you know the truth, and the truth frees you by turning from sin, turning **to** him in forgiveness, in transformation and on this day, reformation, and serving him with all that you have.

A definition that we use for stewardship is living a life of gratitude and generosity for all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Notice those first three words. Our stewardship of our resources is about **living a life** and as a community of faith we gather together with churches all over the world to celebrate the 500 Anniversary of the Reformation. A Reformation begun by Martin Luther, monk, priest, professor, and yes change agent who changed the church and society and the world by focusing on God's love and amazing grace.

Along with the likes of Philip Melanchthon the writer of the Augsburg Confession. Johann Sebastian Bach who took Lutheran Theology and turned it into beautiful music. Peter Muhlenberg, from this area who left the pulpit to serve the revolutionary cause. Sister Elisabeth Fedde who started a hospital in Brooklyn for Norwegian immigrants and whose hospital is the center of that community even today. Of Albert Schweitzer, Nobel laureate, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Lutheran pastor who resisted the Nazis, and even Doctor Seuss who shared his Lutheran faith through children's books. And we even have a NASCAR driver, Dale Earnhardt, Jr., how's that?

Do you want to know the truth? Know Jesus, revealed in holy scripture, the eternal word, the living Logos, word made flesh, our flesh; to know life, our life; he knows our death and yet he offers us his resurrection, so that you and I can experience resurrection and eternal life ourselves.

Jesus is there for us through his living word, offering truth, life, grace and love. And he gives us freedom, real freedom. But what does this freedom mean? It is nothing less than the freedom to be able to pray, to be able to worship God, to focus all of our energies on the things of God rather than the concerns of man. We are free to serve, to use our gifts for ministry and care for our neighbor. We are free to give, as Luther said, *"Take a look at your own heart, and you will soon find out what has stuck to it and where your treasure is. It is easy to determine whether hearing the Word of God, living according to it, and achieving such a life gives you as much enjoyment and calls forth as much diligence from you as does accumulating and saving money and property."*

And we are free to laugh. Ministry is can be fun. We are joined in celebration as we are gathered and united and empowered. Luther said, *"The gospel is nothing less than laughter and joy."*

And we are free to be, to be who you are, the redeemed child of God, not perfect, but growing in faith, in Christ, in grace, in God's Holy Word.

A Lutheran pastor once said, we don't say "back to Luther"; we say "forward to Luther!" Because Luther is so far ahead of us that we haven't even caught up to him yet. (Ulrich Asendorf)

As we gather to celebrate The Reformation it is not just a celebration of a past event or time, The Reformation is a living journey, a great journey where we live into the promises of God. It's an attitude of faithful witness to Jesus, a living out of the Solas, the "onlys"; that we have been focusing on for the past five weeks. Only faith, only grace, only Christ, only God's glory, only the Word. And we join our voices with all those who have gone before us in the spirit of the Lutheran Reformation as we celebrate today, may their spirit of Reformation inspire us for the future which is in God's hands and calls us into mission and ministry for the sake of the living reforming gospel and the proclamation of God's truth and freedom for all of us, indeed for the whole world. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Copyright © 2017, Jack M. Horner. All rights reserved.



www.trinitycamphill.org