

Sunday, October 28, 2007
Reformation Sunday

INTRODUCTION

This day the Lutheran church remembers with thanksgiving the events of the sixteenth-century Reformation. We rightly celebrate the Reformation not when we glory in the events of the past, but rather when we pray, "Come, Holy Spirit!" The church is always in need of reform, always in need of dying again in Christ and being raised from the dead, so that it might be truly free. We celebrate our apostolic faith as we also remember saints Simon and Jude.

Simon and Jude, Apostles

We know little about these apostles. Simon is listed as "the zealot" or Cananean in New Testament lists. Jude, also called Thaddeus, asked Jesus at the last supper why he had revealed himself to the disciples but not to the world.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW)

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.

READINGS

Jeremiah 31:31–34
Psalm 46
Romans 3:19–28
John 8:31–36

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 (ELW): Psalm 46

¹God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
²Therefore 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.
⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,

the holy habitation of¹ the Most High.

⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall¹ not be shaken;
God shall help it at the¹ break of day.

**⁶The nations rage, and the¹ kingdoms shake;
God speaks, and the earth¹ melts away. R**

⁷The LORD of¹ hosts is with us;
he God of Jacob¹ is our stronghold.

**⁸Come now, regard the works¹ of the LORD,
what desolations God has brought up-¹ on the earth;**

⁹behold the one who makes war to cease in¹ all the world;
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the¹ shields with fire.

**¹⁰"Be still, then, and know that¹ I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted¹ in the earth."**

¹¹The LORD of¹ hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob¹ is our stronghold. R

SECOND READING: Romans 3:19–28

Paul's words stand at the heart of the preaching of Martin Luther and the 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.

GOSPEL: John 8:31–36

YEAR A Jesus speaks of truth and freedom as spiritual realities known through his word. He reveals the truth that sets people free from sin. *YEAR B* Here Jesus promises that true freedom—the freedom to serve our loving God—comes through the truth of the gospel. It is this truth that is revealed in the life of the Lord Jesus. *YEAR C* The Reformation sought to emphasize that true freedom is not related to ethnic distinctions or social class. Only Jesus can free us from slavery to sin, which he does through the truth of the gospel.

³¹Then Jesus 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 for the life of the world, the intentions of all the faithful, and for any in sorrow or need.

A brief silence.

Grateful for Christ's church and for all who labor for her mission, we sing our thanks for reformers of old even as we pray for continual reformation today and in the days to come. Let us bless the Lord;
thanks be to God.

The earth spins on in deepest space, a mystery of love in God's immense grace. We hallow God's great gift of time and life. Let us bless the Lord;
thanks be to God.

With gratitude we remember the countries of the Reformation and the heritage they maintain even as we rejoice at the growth of the evangelical Lutheran church in Africa and Asia. Let us bless the Lord;
thanks be to God.

We hold up the ministry of nurses, social workers, counselors, and diaconal ministers, giving thanks for their courage, faith, and support from companions in Christ. Let us bless the Lord;
thanks be to God.

We give thanks for generosity in this and every congregation, and pray that our tithes and offerings be extended even as Christ's love abounds in us from day to day. Let us bless the Lord;
thanks be to God.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In thanksgiving we remember saints who have gone before us (*especially the apostles Simon and Jude*), and we pray for the day when we shall stand with them at the feast that has no end, at the table of the Lamb. Let us bless the Lord;
thanks be to God.

Into your hands, eternal God, we offer our prayers, trusting your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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