

Worship Bulletin – Reformation Sunday

October 25, 2020

GATHERING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (ELW p. 116)

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

GATHERING SONG *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (isometric)* (ELW 504)

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

1 A might - y for - tress is our God, a sword and shield vic -
 2 No strength of ours can match his might! We would be lost, re -
 3 Though hordes of dev - ils fill the land all threat - ning to de -
 4 God's Word for - ev - er shall a - bide, no thanks to foes, who

to - rious; he breaks the cruel op - pres - sor's rod and
 ject - ed. But now a cham - pion comes to fight, whom
 your us, we trem - ble not, un - moved we stand; they
 fear it; for God him - self fights by our side with

wins sal - va - tion glo - rious. The old sa - tan - ic foe
 God him - self e - lect - ed. You ask who this may be?
 can - not o - ver - pow'r us. Let this world's ty - rant rage;
 weap - ons of the Spir - it. Were they to take our house,

has sworn to work us woe! With craft and dread - ful might
 The Lord of hosts is he! Christ Je - sus, might - y Lord,
 in bat - tle we'll en - gage! His might is doomed to fail;
 goods, hon - or, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched a - way,

he arms him - self to fight. On earth he has no e - qual.
 God's on - ly Son, a - dored. He holds the field vic - to - rious.
 God's judg - ment must pre - vail! One lit - tle word sub - dues him.
 they can - not win the day. The king - dom's ours for - ev - er!

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
 Music: EIN FESTE BURG, Martin Luther

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A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

1 A mighty fortress is our God,
a sword and shield victorious;
he breaks the cruel oppressor's rod
and wins salvation glorious.
The old satanic foe
has sworn to work us woe!
With craft and dreadful might
he arms himself to fight.
On earth he has no equal.

2 No strength of ours can match his might!
We would be lost, rejected.
But now a champion comes to fight,
whom God himself elected.
You ask who this may be?
The Lord of hosts is he!
Christ Jesus, mighty Lord,
God's only Son, adored.
He holds the field victorious.

3 Though hordes of devils fill the land
all threat'ning to devour us,
we tremble not, unmoved we stand;
they cannot overpow'r us.
Let this world's tyrant rage;
in battle we'll engage!
His might is doomed to fail;
God's judgment must prevail!
One little word subdues him.

4 God's Word forever shall abide,
no thanks to foes, who fear it;
for God himself fights by our side
with weapons of the Spirit.
Were they to take our house,
goods, honor, child, or spouse,
through life be wrenched away,
they cannot win the day.
The kingdom's ours forever!

GREETING (ELW p. 120)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW p. 124)

Let us pray.

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.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:31-34

A reading from Jeremiah.

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 46

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. (*Ps. 46:7*)

1 God 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;**

3 though 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.**

5 God 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.**

7 The 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 upon the earth;**

9 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.

10 **“Be still, then, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”**

11 The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

SECOND READING: Romans 3:19-28

A reading from Romans.

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.

19 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. 20 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.

21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 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; 26 it 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (ELW p. 124)

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

GOSPEL: John 8:31-36

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus speaks of truth and freedom as spiritual realities known through his word. He reveals the truth that sets people free from sin.

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."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON (ELW p. 125)

In "Dear Church," Rev. Lenny Duncan writes the following:

We don't know what the future holds for this church, so how did we get here? It might be simpler for me to answer how *I* got here- because the story is just as surprising. I'm a pastor, but if you looked at my life story, I think we'd both agree I was more likely to end up in prison than the pulpit. In fact, it's a miracle I'm still alive. I'm a former drug dealer, sex worker, homeless queer teen and felon. How the [bleep] did I get here? I got here because I met Jesus when I met you, Church. Whenever I think of my first experience in the ELCA, I get goosebumps. Rev.

Tim Johansen at Temple Lutheran Church in Havertown, Pennsylvania, stood at the Communion table and declared “This is Jesus’s table; he made no restrictions, and neither do we.” I was smitten immediately. There was no membership meeting, no checking my theology, no “friendly” talk with the pastor before I approached the table of grace. I was welcome, and this was revolutionary to me. You were everything I wanted Church.... Tears welled up in my eyes as I walked up the aisle. I mean, you loved me, you really loved me. This welcome to the table was something I had never experienced before. I didn’t even know what it was. It awaked the shadow side of my relationship with God that I hadn’t had the courage to look under. It was like a knife that cut instantly through years of shame and brokenness and released me from those bonds. Grace is like a knife sometimes.... In one sentence, ELCA, you had done more for me than any church had ever done. I approached the table with my head held high and love in my heart. For the first time in my life, I wasn’t filled with the fear that I was dragging to the Communion rail everything that I had ever done. Of course, I still carried these things, but somehow you welcomed me anyway. You showed me that my past didn’t make me unworthy to receive the nearness of God in the elements. I could stand before the table of grace a whole person—deeply flawed and still incredibly valued, handmade by a loving God... You loved me. I loved you. You loved me first, too.¹

I like that line. “Grace is like a knife sometime.”

Today, we celebrate Reformation Sunday and we remember that Martin Luther, too, had an awe-inspiring moment that changed his life, relationship with God and relationships with Grace forever. I would dare to say that Luther, too, discovered that “grace is like a knife sometimes.” It was reading Romans in a belltower that grace discovered Luther and cut through layers of feeling like God hated him and that he would never measure up to God’s perfection. Grace cut like a knife through all that, revealing that, indeed, he could not measure up to God’s goodness, but because of God’s abundant grace and love for us, he didn’t have to try to measure up anyhow. Throughout Luther’s life, grace would keep cutting away at Martin’s doubts and fears. This change was really what was at the heart of the Reformation. As the Gospel reminds us, truth sets us free. Grace cut Luther free from the false lies of the Accuser, the devil, who was constantly telling Luther that he would always be forsaken. And when Luther was cut free from the fears that bound him, Luther was able to be a better servant to the church and the reformer we celebrate today.

This Reformation Sunday looks different from others in the past, a far cry to be sure from our 500th Anniversary celebration a few years ago. I hope you listen to some of the great music that will be online as well as enjoying the instrumental music we have here today. Our church isn’t as packed as it has been. Our Confirmation service (which generally happens on or near our Reformation Sunday) has been postponed until a later date to better allow families to participate. It can feel like a let down.

But maybe, instead, we can view it as a simplifying, focusing or, cutting to the point.

¹ Duncan, Lenny. *Dear Church: A love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019)

Because Reformation Sunday isn't, in the end, about wearing red or the hymns we sing. The historical information of 1517 and the following Reformation is interesting, helpful and clarifying-but it's a means to an end, not the end itself. If Martin Luther was here with us today, he would be the first to remind us that he was nothing more than a human being (actually, you can look up some choice words and colorful language he used to respond to those who lifted him up on a pedestal). Reformation Sunday is all about how God's grace changed the world, changes the world now, and changes each one of us. It's all about how grace is like a knife.

Like Lenny Duncan, who we heard from in the first quote in this sermon, I love how the ELCA shares this grace that God has so unabashedly given to us. Though I haven't been able to go for a while now, I love going to the nursing homes and assuring people that anyone really is welcome at the table, because it never was our table to begin with, it was always our Lord's table and He was always known to eat with tax collectors and sinners. I love proclaiming to people when they visit our sanctuary that, "Come, join us at the table! We've been waiting for you." I love that we come to the table and live our lives together as a church as equals, all of us as saints and sinners the same.

I love the way we share that grace by our coat ministry, food ministry and more. I love that we open our churches and lives to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the daycare. I love that we provide a place of welcome to all ages and try our best to reach out to these groups. We aren't the source of grace, but I think we share God's grace in some amazing ways. In this way, too, maybe we are like knives, cutting away at the despair, isolation, need and division in our world.

If the world ever needed to hear a word of grace, it's now. One of our teachers in the church had on her Facebook page this quote from Brad Johnson, "I think teacher evaluations right now should focus on the following questions: How are you doing? Are you taking care of yourself? How is your family? How can I best support you right now?" It caused me to laugh and sigh because it is so true. And, not just for teachers, for families, for our seniors struggling with isolation, for... well... all of us.... We all need to be evaluated and greeted with these types of questions each day because we all need some extra helpings of grace these days.

We, the church, need to be the ones to go out and ask these grace-filled questions. We need to be the ones that allow ourselves the freedom to not live up to everyone's expectations... or even our own. We need to look at the people around us as fellow brothers and sisters who are, probably this year, just faking it until we make it.

Sometimes it takes an unusual year to help you re-focus and remember what this is all about anyway. This isn't about a moment in history or a brave and somewhat erratic man. It's about grace.

Where do you see grace? How can you stay focused and fixed on grace? How can you be an instrument of grace?

May we see grace acting like a knife around us, freeing us to love and serve the world.

Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY *Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word* (ELW 517)

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word



1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in your word; curb those who
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, your pow'r make known, for you are
3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, send peace and



by de - ceit or sword would wrest the king - dom from your Son
Lord of lords a - lone; de - fend your ho - ly church, that we
u - ni - ty on earth; sup - port us in our fi - nal strife



and bring to naught all he has done.
may sing your praise e - ter - nal - ly.
and lead us out of death to life.

Text: Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.
Music: ERHALT UNS, HERR, J. Klug, *Geistliche Lieder*, 1543

Words

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

1 Lord, keep us steadfast in your word;
curb those who by deceit or sword
would wrest the kingdom from your Son
and bring to naught all he has done.

2 Lord Jesus Christ, your pow'r make known,
for you are Lord of lords alone;
defend your holy church, that we
may sing your praise eternally.

3 O Comforter of priceless worth,
send peace and unity on earth;
support us in our final strife
and lead us out of death to life.

INSTALLATION FOR TAYLOR HUWE

Lord, we thank you for equipping us with the people and equipment needed for our online and radio worship services. Thank you for bringing Taylor to us and giving him the heart to serve us in this way. Guide him as he works. Be with those who will hear these worship services in their homes. Surround them with your love, and may these services draw them closer to us and to You. Amen.

CREED (ELW p. 126)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Renew and inspire the church in the freedom of the gospel, O God. Where the church is in error, reform it. Where the church speaks your truth, strengthen it. Where the church is divided, unify it. Ignite in us the working of the Holy Spirit. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

As the earth changes, as mountains shake and the waters roar, may we care for this planet as a holy habitation for all living things. Sustain all peoples and lands recovering from natural disasters of any kind especially hurricanes and fires. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Guide areas of the world divided or traumatized by conflict, especially in our own land. Free all from slavery and human trafficking, and protect all in harm's way. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Release those living in bondage to debts, chronic pain, or addiction. Grant healing touch to those who are ill....We especially remember...

Charlene Wachter, Bob Dieter, Mary Kraft, Marilyn Frisch, Julie & Denny Christensen, Dianne Sanderson, Betty Nelson **Members in Nursing Homes:** Bobbie Elvin, Gene Wachter, Sandra Marsh **Members in Care Facilities:** Joan Doeden, Adeline Larson, Jean Bender **Family Members & Friends:** Lois Gruis, Josh Hansen (Mary Ingenthron's son), Lee Morrison (Terry Morrison's son), Henrietta Lais, Tom Morgan (Sandy Randall's dad), Peggy Konold (Norma Radenbaugh's daughter), Brad Martens (Valerie Veen's son) **Our service men and women Our Missionaries:** Chuck & Sybil Rounds in Costa Rica and Love INC. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we thank you for a safe and abundant harvest season. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

In this family of faith we give thanks for courageous voices that have remained firm in their commitment to the one who frees us from sin and death. Centered in your grace, unify us in the hope of the gospel. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Even in death, you free us and give us a place in your house. We give thanks for our ancestors who have shown us truth and freedom, especially Martin Luther and those who work for the renewal of the church. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

OFFERING AND CGC MOMENT

OFFERING PRAYER (ELW p. 129)

Let us pray.

God of mercy and grace, the eyes of all wait upon you, and you open your hand in blessing. Fill us with good things at your table, that we may come to the help of all in need, through Jesus Christ, our redeemer and Lord.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (ELW p. 134)

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING (ELW p. 136)

The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The God of all grace ✠ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG *Lift High the Cross* (ELW 660)

Lift High the Cross

Refrain

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.

1 Come, Christians, follow where our captain trod,
our king victorious, Christ, the Son of God. Refrain

2 All newborn servants of the Crucified
bear on their brows the seal of him who died. Refrain

3 O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw us all to thee. Refrain

4 So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory! Refrain

DISMISSAL (ELW p. 137)

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

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