

REFORMATION SUNDAY

Sunday, October 27, 2024

Introduction to the day

Rooted in the past and growing into the future, the church must always be reformed in order to live out the love of Christ in an ever-changing world. We celebrate the good news of God's grace, that Jesus Christ sets us free every day to do this life-transforming work. Trusting in the freedom given to us in baptism, we pray for the church, that Christians will unite more fully in worship and mission.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.

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.

PSALM: Psalm 46

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

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.

GOSPEL: John 8:31-36

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

GOSPEL MESSAGE - You Are Truly Free

"But we have never been slaves to anyone," the crowd tells Jesus after he proclaims his message of freedom. One wonders why it was so difficult for them to comprehend the offer he was talking about, given the Roman occupiers who controlled much of their lives. Then again, many of us also find it hard to relate to the need for freedom from captivity, so certain are we that we are fully free. If we were honest, we'd recognize the many things that hold our focus and stop us from experiencing life to its fullest: news headlines, health concerns, our jobs, economic and social structures that bind us all.

Jesus' proclamation to this crowd reminds us that there will always be things vying for control of our lives, but the gospel invites us to center ourselves instead in Jesus, the truth who sets us free. In Christ, we are complete—not because of anything we do or own, but because of who God is and what God has done for us. In the waters of baptism, we are proclaimed children of God, and nothing will ever change this. In Christ, we are freed from all that holds us captive, so we can lean into God's abundance for us.

As we celebrate Reformation, we remember Martin Luther, a Catholic monk who was tormented by his own unworthiness before God. He was convinced he was not good enough. Then Luther discovered through the book of Romans that grace cannot be bought or earned; it is a pure gift to us, and this changed everything.

Since there is nothing we need to do to earn God's love and acceptance, our lives are open to endless possibilities. How can we embrace the freedom God gives us? What can we do with this gift to bring peace and justice a little closer for our neighbors? What do you want to do—now that you don't *have* to do anything?

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Challenged by God's Word in Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and the whole creation.

Lord of all, we give thanks for the whole church throughout the world. Open wide the paths toward unity between denominations so that all followers of Christ may join in shared worship and mission. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Renewing God, as the dying leaves display their beauty, we are reminded that nature's cycle of life includes and requires both life and death. Instill in your people a mission of preservation and appreciation for trees, animals, and waterways threatened by climate collapse. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, in the spirit of reformation we pray for all who cry out for relief from systemic oppression. May the hearts of those who occupy seats of power be reformed so that peace becomes the center of our life together. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Comforting God, be with all who are sick, suffering, or grieving in our own community and beyond especially Linda Boland, Ken Fulford, Sandra Gagnon, Shirley Glickman, Walter Hobden, Donna L. Hoffman, Claude Jeannotte, Bill Lorbetskie, Glenda Panke, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, Denita Wolfram, Elaine Yourth, Harold Yourth, Stephanie Yourth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. Surround them with the promise of your love, comfort, and grace that never ends. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. (pause) God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Divine Guide, continue to challenge this community to be ever reforming in our ministries and outreach efforts. Inspire creative ideas among us so that the communal, grace-filled word of God remains at the heart of our ministry. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, in Christ's resurrection you ensure that though life be wrenched away, death cannot win the day. May the truth of your saving grace through faith sustain our hope for life in you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the saving grace you freely give, both now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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