

**John 8:31-36**  
**"The Truth Sets Us Free"**  
**Reformation Sunday**

**October 28, 2018**  
**First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.**  
**Pastor Peter Adelsen**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

***[The Goose and the Eagle]***

As the official executioner was about to light the pyre at the feet of the reformer, he said, "Now we will cook the goose."

This condemned man replied: "Yes, but there will come an eagle in a hundred years that you will not reach."

Truth may be suppressed for a time, but it always wins the day.

This cooked goose was Jan Huss, for "Huss" is Bohemian for goose. Huss was condemned by the Roman Church as a heretic for his attempted reformation. But, as Huss felt the heat of the flames, he spoke of an eagle who would not be condemned to death.

This eagle that the Roman Church was unable to reach was, of course, Martin Luther.

Today, we celebrate the reformation that brought back the importance of God's Word.

***[God Provided for Luther]***

We, as Lutheran Christians, should have much pride this day. We don't have pride in Luther, but in how the Triune God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – used Luther and protected Luther in order to bring the truth of Christ out of the darkness.

Now, the gospel was not totally hidden in Luther's time, for there were attempted reformations, but much of the gospel was repressed from God's people, including from most priests.

You see, very few priests had a Bible in their possession or if they had a Bible they likely couldn't read it, so they just took orders from their bishop, who took orders from their cardinal, who took orders from the pope.

For Luther, the Triune God lined up everything for him. God gave Luther the proper friends and the protection needed to proclaim the good news of Christ that had been repressed from the people.

- Because of the Lutheran Reformation, lay people are able to participate in the Divine Service.
- Because of the Lutheran Reformation, lay people are able to receive *both* the body and the blood of Christ at the Lord's Supper for forgiveness of sins.
- Because of the Lutheran Reformation, we are able to read God's inerrant Word in our common language.
- Because of the Lutheran Reformation, we are reminded that we are not saved by works, but we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus.
- And, because of the Lutheran Reformation, we do good works for the benefit of our neighbor.

The Reformation can be summed up in the four solas: Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone), Sola Fide (Faith Alone), Sola Gratia (Grace Alone), and Sola Christus (Christ Alone).

The Reformation can also be summed up into one word: Loyalty. So, who or what are you loyal to?

### *[Loyalty]*

In our gospel lesson, Jesus spoke to the Jews who had believed in Him. He said to them: ***“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”*** (John 8:31-32).

What Jesus is saying is a hard teaching for many of us in the pews today.

What Jesus is saying to us – His followers – is not to be superficial. He requires all Christian disciples to be genuine. So, in order to be a disciple of Jesus, you must accept all of Christ's teachings and remain faithful to it.

This means to be a Christ follower – a Christian – we are to at all times and in all places abide in Christ’s Word. For Jesus **never** said, “My disciples can pick and choose what they want to believe.”

Here, Christ is speaking of the First Commandment: ***You shall have no other gods.***

For which Martin Luther says: “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”

This teaching of God has been tough since Man’s Fall into Sin. From that time, we have become confused in what we fear, love and trust in above all things.

You see, we often listen to our sinful self-centered self, rather than God.

Or, if we believe in God, then face a challenge in our life – such as loss of a loved one, loss of employment, or a friend or family member demeaning you for your Christian faith – sometimes we may just give up on God, and instead seek refuge in a false god.

Martin Luther even speaks of this:

“I dare say I, too, would gladly be a Christian and have the Gospel if no danger were connected with it but one might expect only good days upon its acceptance; for not everybody is able to bear hatred, envy, contempt, and ingratitude in the world. But when one undertakes to become a pupil of this Man (Jesus Christ), the devil and all the world rise in opposition. Stand fast, then, hold on, do not flee, do not draw back. If you have begun to believe, carry it through to the end. There are many who stay with it, who shed their blood and boldly stake and risk everything. These are the true disciples, and they remain constant.”<sup>1</sup>

As Christians, we should remember that we walk in danger all the way as Satan assails us, but when we abide in Jesus, His guidance never fails us. You see, Christ leads us on the right path. (LSB 716: *I Walk in Danger All The Way*)

So, who is your master? Jesus or sin?

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<sup>1</sup> What Luther Says, #107, p. 38.

***[Our Master]***

As we heard in the gospel today, those Jews responded to Jesus saying: ***“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”*** (John 8:33)

At this moment, Jesus had to have chuckled, at least a little bit.

Are these Jews serious?! Is this a joke?!

As we all know, it was God who led the Jews out of bondage in Egypt. And since the exodus, the Jews had become enslaved or taken over numerous times.

In fact, at that very moment, Rome had control over the Jewish land.

Jesus responded to the Jews saying, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin”*** (John 8:34).

Now, when Jesus says, ***“Truly, truly,”*** He is saying that you better listen, because what follows is very important.

So, who is your master? Jesus or sin?

***[The Truth]***

So, if we abide in Christ’s Word, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free.

We may believe that we have freedom living in the United States of America, but this is not true freedom. Here we pay taxes, or else the IRS will come after us.

True freedom is only found in Jesus. It is only in Jesus and His teaching that we are free from sin, death, and Satan’s rule.

The truth is that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ***“For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*** (Romans 3:22b-23).

But there is good news! There is a way out from the grips of sin and that is through Jesus Christ alone. He is the truth that sets us free!

The Apostle Paul tells us of this good news: ***“The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe”*** (Romans 3:22a)... ***“And (we) are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”*** (Romans 3:24).

You see, although everyone has fallen short of the glory of God, God has not forgotten you. He still loves you – despite your sin.

Now, are we to sin all the more since we have been given this grace? Paul gives us the answer: ***“By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law”*** (Romans 3:31b).

The law that Paul is referring to is Moral Law.

You see, a Christian should be easily identified from society. We should not be following the waves and winds of the sinful culture, but abiding in God’s Word.

God reminds us that one day we will all have to give an account of ourselves to God. This is something we should remember when we do our civic duty to elect people to represent us. When we vote, will you do so with your Christian faith in mind, or will you vote according to the sinful desires of men?

You see, if we are no different than the culture, then we have replaced the one true God with a false god and we are still under the bondage of sin.

Instead, non-Christians should notice that we are different from the rest of society and ask us why we live as we do?

And that answer is that we are free through Jesus Christ.

***[The Truth is Jesus]***

We are free because we know the Truth and the Truth is Jesus Christ. Jesus alludes to this when He says, ***“The truth will set you free.”***

This is Him.

In fact, He even says He is the Truth outright later in John’s gospel: ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”*** (John 14:6).

So, how does the Truth set us free?

We were set free when the Triune God adopted us at our Baptism. You see, when we were baptized, we were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. We were cloaked in Christ's righteousness. Now, we share in what Christ has done.

And why does our Baptism matter?

Jesus set us free when He died nailed to the cross on that Good Friday and when He rose from the dead on that Easter Sunday. This is how we were set free.

It is only through Christ that we are set free from the powers of sin, death and Satan. And in return, Jesus gives His disciples: forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

You see, through the Truth of Christ we are free! Instead of living in sin, we are forgiven and made clean. We are free when Christ says: ***"You are forgiven, now go and sin no more."*** We are free when Christ says: ***"Take, eat; this is my body. Take, drink this is my blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of your faith."***

We are free by God's grace through our faith in Christ, we are redeemed through Christ's death and resurrection. We are covered in the blanket of Christ's righteousness.

For it is Christ alone, who is the Truth who sets us free.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠