

## Reformation Sunday

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

Introduction: Change. Challenge. Revolution. Our past. Luther. Reformation.

What is it we are celebrating today? Certainly, we commemorate history, a story about people that lived over 450 years ago. It's about a man named Martin Luther and others who thought that the priests and other church leaders were not following the Word of God as Jesus taught us. Dr. Luther was a very talkative man and had a lot to say about this problem. He was almost killed for what he was saying about the church, but in the end he said no matter what happened, he had to speak the truth about Jesus. And that Truth changed the church.

Then there is Reformation: changing, renewing, rethinking, so we are always following Jesus; words. Dr. Luther's 95 Theses are a list of complaints he had about his church, things he saw that he thought were wrong. He called for dialogue, discussion. He called for a review of faith and practice. He asked questions and sought answers from God through prayer and scripture. He listened to the living Word of God. He took seriously those answers. Then, he changed the world.

So, is the Reformation over? Is it only in the past? Or is it reformation with a small "r"? Is reformation, making changes, part of what Jesus wants us to do? What do we see that is wrong with our church today? Our community? Our world? It is, after all, a community of people who are very human and fallible. What is the Living Word telling us? What questions is God asking us? What is Christ calling us to do about those wrongs? Are the wrongs we want to change something that Jesus wants us to correct, or are they things we personally just don't like, or feel uncomfortable with? What are we to change? Let us hear, feel and live the Word of God. Let us ask the questions, like Martin Luther did, and perhaps we too can change the world.

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There is a revolutionary sitting among us, a person who is working to upset the status quo, change the face of society, throw out the old way of doing things, strip away everything that is comfortable and reliable, everything that is us, who we are.

**"Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a person's foe will be those of his own household."**

Everything changes, doesn't it, when we hear those words? Our family is no longer to be the focal point of our life. Our family is no longer part of who we are. Our family is no longer the source of order and serenity in our life. The rules are broken, and the foundation of our life isn't as solid as we thought it was.

**“Those who love father or mother more than me are not worthy of me; and those who love son or daughter more than me are not worthy of me; and those who do not take their cross and follow me are not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”**

Follow him. That is the call of a revolutionary. Follow him where? Follow him out of the bounds that society has said are correct. Follow him into no man's land. Follow him into a world where you've never been, into a world inhabited by strangers and outcasts – the homeless, the mentally ill, the prostitutes and pimps, the thieves, the dishonest, the immigrants, the elderly, the people with AIDS. In other words, the people who smell funny, talk strangely, live badly, look ugly, who may be dangerous – the people you would never, ever take out to dinner, much less invite into your home. That's where this revolutionary leads. That is where Jesus is taking us.

**When Jesus came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.”**

Touch the untouchables; reach out for the impossible, welcome the unthinkable. All of this leads to changes in our thinking, changes in our lives, changes in society. The great reformation of our spirits and hearts and minds is what this revolutionary is calling for. Changes – reflecting the Kingdom of God to bring in the Kingdom of God.

**The Pharisees said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when Jesus heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick do. Go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.”**

“I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” I desire action, not ceremony. I desire risk, not safety. Reformation is all about risk and changes, about going where Jesus leads, not knowing where it will end, knowing only that Jesus requires that we reform our lives, our families, our society, our very selves.

**“God knows, I, Martin Luther, never thought of going as far as I did. I intended only to attack indulgences. If anybody had told me, a celibate priest, when I was at the Diet of**

**Worms, 'In a few years you'll have a wife and your own household,' I wouldn't have believed it."**

There is a revolutionary sitting among us, a person who is working to shake up the establishment, reform the rules we live by, challenge our faith, lift us out of our rut, revise the way we think, and change the focus of our world. This is the day the universe changes, because this revolutionary is our Lord, Jesus Christ.