

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

Reformation Sunday  
First Trinity Lutheran Church  
Pastor Wendy Moen  
October 28, 2007

we share the Good News of God's grace with the world.  
We share Christ's love with the world.

As people freed to love God and one another  
we witness to the truth of the gospel  
when we remember that God declared each person  
would be held accountable for their own sins,  
they would not and should not be transferred to another generation,  
even if they came to this country illegally.

As people freed to love God and one another  
we witness to the truth of the gospel  
proclaiming hope in the midst of despair and destruction –  
natural and human-made - around the world.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

established the forgiveness of all sin,  
God covers our sins, covers our debts.  
We cannot earn our seat next to God through our good activities.  
We cannot buy our seat next to God through  
an indulgence or a tithe, or through anything we do;  
and the more we try to save ourselves,  
the more we know the truth: that we are not free.

But the good news is that by grace we are set free.  
By grace we are made able to do what we cannot do by ourselves.  
By the faithfulness of God we are held up;  
by the grace of God we are set free--free to love God and one another.

This is what Martin Luther discovered in the gospel.  
That is what Martin Luther and the others risked their lives for.  
That we are freed by God's grace alone is what allowed  
Martin Luther to let go of everything that had  
kept him safe and put all his trust in God.

And, that is what I hope we witness to today.  
As people freed to love God and one another  
we witness to the truth of the gospel  
with a belief that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.  
Freed to love God and one another,  
our witness to the world is our centering in the Bible –  
the place where we find out about  
God, Jesus, grace, faith, community and so much more.  
Freed to love God and one another  
we witness to the truth of the gospel  
seeking guidance in Holy Scripture for  
our discussions on love, death, human sexuality, community, parenting.

We witness to the truth of the gospel  
finding shared points of faith with  
other Protestants, Catholics, Muslims and all the world religions.

Freed to love God and one another

It is the Law in the Bible – God’s commands and instructions – that shows us where we go wrong.

The Law shows us we have been captured by sin.

But it is not enough to understand law.

Study of the law alone makes you a slave to the law.

The Law does not make you free

for “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.

Law does not have the power to justify –

to set right, to pronounce just, to treat with righteousness.

That is God’s job. Only God has the power to do that.

Martin Luther was taught the Law.

Luther studied God’s Word ,and inspired by the Spirit he saw Grace.

Luther, Melanchthon and other protesters said,

something has freed us, someone has justified us.

It is right here in God’s Word – Word that comes to us today in the gospel of John and Paul’s letter to the Romans.

The Son makes us free.

Through Jesus Christ –

through God’s only Son who died showing us God’s mercy and righteousness in overlooking our past sins –

we are justified = set right by God through faith.

Standing before God as sinner,

God looks at us through the cross of Jesus and sees a saint.

This is how God wants it.

God extends mercy and grace because that’s who God is.

Time and time, again and again in the Bible,

from the rainbow after the flood,

to the new covenant in Jeremiah,

to Jesus birth,

to the Passover Supper

where a new covenant in Jesus’ body and blood

spoke passionately, that witnessed to the Truth found in the gospel.

These are our ancestors.

Martin Luther and others witnessed to

The Truth that we are not free.

We are not free from sin,

from hurting ourselves, from hurting others.

We can not keep from losing our tempers on occasion,

from being grumpy, from not doing the best that we can.

Ed Phillips is a Californian who lost his house to fire this week.

This is from an article in the Washington Post:<sup>1</sup>

After inching his car down the street to safety,

Phillips said, his exhilaration and relief instantly turned to guilt:

What if the couple in their 80s who live next door didn't get out?

He turned around, coughing and gagging, and

drove back through the wall of smoke.

"I'm going to be a hero!" he remembers thinking.

By then the houses were all in flames,

and there were no doors to knock on.

*Phillips* [Spooky Man] retreated and escaped a second time, alone.

"You know, your first thought is just of yourself, to get out,"

he admits out loud. "That's probably the frailty of being human."

This is our human predicament - a sinful nature,

yet we seek to know God and God's will.

We are not free from the power of sin - something or  
someone to dominate our lives.

We are slaves, slaves to sin.

And, so we are cut off from God.

Yet we seek God.

And around and around we go.

We are not right with God.

We are unrighteous before God.

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<sup>1</sup> WashingtonPost.com – "In One Cul-De-Sac, Neighbors Are All That's Left" Sunday, October 28, 2007

Perhaps you will recognize a prayer like this:

Dear God,  
I've done pretty well today.  
I haven't gossiped or lost my temper.  
I haven't even been tempted by that cake left in the kitchen.  
I said my prayers and asked for your guidance.  
Now, Lord, it is about time to get out of bed;  
I think that is when I'm really going to need your help.  
Please stay near by.  
Amen.

Whether you have said this prayer before or not,  
it is likely that you recognize it as something you could pray.  
And, you would be in good company.  
For centuries, people have tried to get right with God.  
Sin has been a part of our human experience since Adam and Eve.  
We are humans; creatures susceptible to temptation.  
We are also created with a desire to be right with God.  
This desire isn't always realized but  
it is inside of each and every one of us.  
In this world, sin dominates.

Today we celebrate the Protestant Reformation.  
If you are here today, Lutheran or not,  
this is part of your history:  
A movement that sought reform of religious practice,  
reform of religious economics and religious enslavement.  
No longer could Martin Luther and others  
participate in trafficked forgiveness.  
No longer could they participate in or teach  
the buying and selling of salvation.  
No longer could they participate in a system and theology that  
offered forgiveness based on our own adherence to  
God's laws and good behavior.

The Protestant Reformers were a group of people that