

Reformation Sunday (Observed)

October 25, 2020

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today we observe Reformation Sunday. October 31st is the day Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the Castle Church Doors in Wittenberg 503 years ago to bring the scholars of the day together to debate the practice of selling indulgences. Luther had no idea the can of worms he was opening up.

INVOCATION

P: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

OPENING SENTENCES *Psalm 46:1a, 2a; Romans 3:23–24a; John 8:31b–32*

P: God is our refuge and strength;

C: **therefore we will not fear.**

P: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

C: **and are justified by His grace as a gift.**

P: If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples,

C: **and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION *Incorporating Psalm 46:4, 7, 11*

P: Lord of hosts,

C: **hear our confession of sins and grant us Your mercy and forgiveness. We have not trusted in Your promised protection and strength but have looked elsewhere for help and refuge. You alone have provided the remedy for that which truly causes our separation, troubles, and death. For the sake of Christ, Your Son, our Redeemer, grant us forgiveness and deliverance from all that would keep us from Your present help. We ask it in the name of Jesus.**

P: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. Because that river of grace and power has flowed over us in our Baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ, in spite of our fear, the LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

By grace God has created each of us and everything that exists, and in the person of His Son entered our history and paid for our every sin and sin itself. In Christ's resurrection, God's promises have been made sure. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen. The LORD of hosts is with us! The God of Jacob is our fortress!**

SHARING THE PEACE

HYMN No. 644

"The Church's One Foundation"

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

O God, our refuge and strength, always present in trouble, silence our fears when Your good creation seems out of control and evil appears to run rampant.

C: **Like the dawning of a new day, dispel the darkness of our hearts and renew confident faith in Your constant presence and gracious protection;**

P: through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

FIRST READING *Revelation 14:6–7*

(An angel announces the time for judgment.)

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the

hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

L: This is the Word of the Lord.
C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM *Psalm 46 (God is our refuge and strength)*

P: The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

C: **Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.**

P: The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.

C: **God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.**

P: **The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
He utters his voice, the earth melts.**

C: **The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.**

P: Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how He has brought desolations on the earth.

C: **He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
He burns the chariots with fire.**

P: “Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”

ALL: The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

EPISTLE *Romans 3:19–28*

(We need not fear the Law’s accusation, for we are justified by grace.)

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it — the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.
C: **Thanks be to God.**

VERSE *Luke 12:32*

L: Alleluia. Fear not, little flock,
C: **for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Alleluia.**

HOLY GOSPEL *John 8:31–36*

(We are freed from slavery to sin; we are free indeed.)

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the eighth chapter.
C: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They

answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

HYMN No. 656 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

SERMON

Martin Luther's great hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is based on Psalm 46. When the psalm was first written, it gave courage to God's Old Testament people. Centuries later, when Luther wrote the hymn, the world was filled with plagues and death, and the devil was recognized as active in the lives of everyday people. Further, neither the Roman Catholic Church nor the government accepted the teachings of the reformers. Now, in our day, we face cyber warfare, pandemics, terrorists, political polarization, and ecclesiastical division. Because of our Baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ, we need not fear. Our gracious God is a very present help in this time of trouble. He is our refuge against the powers of the created world around us and the forces of evil from every source. From His throne flow streams of mercy to give us confident joy. We know that in the end "the kingdom ours remaineth."

The ancient Israelites appreciated fully the destructive potential of earthquakes ([v. 3](#); [Am 1:1](#); [8:8](#)), so the allusions in this psalm are not purely cosmological. The psalmist imagines the most catastrophic disaster that might challenge the faith of those trusting in God.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

THE APOSTLES' CREED *stand*

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

**And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Incorporating Psalm 46

Pastor: Let us pray for the Church here and around the world and for all people in their varied circumstances.

O God, our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, strengthen the Church here and wherever it gathers around Your Word and celebrates

the blessed Sacraments. Grant confident faith to clergy and laity, pastors in congregations and missionaries in distant lands, elders in the faith and newly baptized alike. Help us to put all our trust in Your protection and power. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Strong Creator, wherever people call out to You as the earth gives way, mountains move into the heart of the sea, and mountains tremble, hear their cries and keep them safe. Awaken courage and wisdom in those who search and rescue, those who provide physical and spiritual counsel, and those who offer long-term support of body and life. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: O Holy Spirit, when nations rage and kingdoms totter, use the earthly powers that be to move the nations and their leaders to seek ways toward peace with their neighbors and stability within their borders. You, who make wars cease to the end of the earth, provide courage and compassion to all who work for peace and protection as they are deployed abroad and all who maintain concord and order within our communities. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Gracious God, stream joy and gladness to those who wait for the dawning of a new day, those dealing with long-term ills, unemployment, discrimination, unjust imprisonment, strife in their families, and the loss of loved ones, [*especially* . . .]. Assure them that You are with them, even now a very present help in trouble. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Lord of hosts, worthy to be exalted among the nations, into Your almighty hands we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray. Hear our prayer for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (*Matthew 6:9-13*)

P: Remember us in Your kingdom, Lord, and teach us to pray:

**All: 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.**

BLESSING OF THE LORD

Numbers 6:24–26

P: The LORD bless you and keep you.
The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The LORD look upon you with favor and + give you peace.
C: **Amen.**

SENDING

P: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
C: **Thanks be to God!**

HYMN No. 805

“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”