



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.

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

I greet you in the name of Jesus, our risen Saviour. Amen.

This Sunday is meant to coincide with October 31st, 1517, the historic date when the Catholic Priest, Father Martin Luther, nailed what has become known as the 95 Theses to the door of the old church in Wittenberg, Germany.

And so, today we do celebrate the power of God's grace to reform and reshape.

It wouldn't be Reformation Sunday without John's text. Jesus says we are no longer second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God. This was a buzzard statement for Jesus to make in his day because there were second-class citizens everywhere. They were called slaves. The only person who could free a slave was the king or the heir of the king. And that is who Jesus is! Jesus is the

heir, the one who can pronounce freedom. It is the truth that makes you free; that God has already made you free and called you a beloved child.

It's about freedom.

The Reformation would not have occurred without Luther hammering his theses against the Wittenberg Church door and by hitting home Paul's declaration that we have all been justified by grace. Grace reigns supreme. This whole Reformation-thing was intended to tell us that in the end we don't need to do anything, earn anything, say anything, accomplish anything, or buy anything to earn God's love. It is a gift given to us.

It's about freedom.

The Gospel, yes, the good news of what God has done in Christ for us and the entire world. It is about freedom too.

I can appreciate that this can be really, really hard to believe. Some of what's happened to us seems so huge, so important, so all-encompassing, but it's not. Not to say that these things don't matter. They do. Illness, disappointment, hurt, whatever. They matter. But they do not *define* us. Nothing we have done or has been done to us captures who we are completely. Only one thing can do that: God, the creator and sustainer of all. And God has chosen to call us beloved children, holy and precious in God's sight. That's what defines us.

And so, we are free. Free to risk and serve and help and care and try and struggle and laugh and cry. We are free, that is, to love, just as God loves us.

Free from our past, free from our regrets, free from fear, free from our hurts and mistakes. We are free. Let me say this again because it can be hard to believe....we are free.

We are set free to be what God has called us to be.....called to love one another as God has loved us.

My friends in Christ. We are followers of Christ, the great reformer. We, here this morning, find ourselves in the Protestant tradition. Being free, are people of reformation. It's a reformation that begins with each and every one of us stopping and centering ourselves, listening to that still small voice within that is calling us, like Peter, to move forward into a fuller expression of the Kingdom of God.

The Spirit *is, in fact*, speaking to each one of us. We are called to wake up each and every day and look out at our world and ask, "Where is the Spirit leading me today to bring about reform and renewal?" The task is ours, dear friends. We are all the great reformers. We are all, together, the hope of the world.

May we always be reformed and always keep reforming, for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of each other, and for the sake of our world.

Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit let us pray as Jesus taught us.....

Lord's Prayer

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.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go out in Joy. Be led forth in peace.

Thanks be to God.

STTLC Communiqué

In Our Prayers Today.....Casey Wierzbicki, Joanna Spencer, Marie Lenser, Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Tracy Schori and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

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