

Reformation Day

October 27, 2024



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Distinguishing between the law and the gospel is the highest art in Christendom, one who every person who values the name Christian ought to recognize, know, and possess. Where this is lacking, it is not possible to tell who is a Christian and who is a pagan or Jew. That much is at stake in this distinction.

– Martin Luther –

The Distinction Between Law and Gospel, 1532

Revelation 14:6–7

In this section of the vision John received while exiled on the island of Patmos, he saw three angels flying over his head. Each of the three heavenly messengers had an announcement to make. The first angel proclaimed “an eternal gospel” to all peoples. That eternal message was to fear God and give him glory. Worship of the one true God is of the utmost importance; false worship will not be tolerated as there can be no religious compromise when the day of judgment comes.

- How is the Gospel not just a message for Christians, but a message for every person — no matter what tribe they belong to or what tongue they speak?
- In what way(s) do you see Christians making unholy compromises in worship these days? Do you think this is a matter of a lack of awareness or something else entirely?

The message of the angels points us back to the beginning of Revelation where the seven churches were commended for their ministry and/or warned about their failures to be faithful to Christ (Revelation 1:4–3:22). The first angel’s message is a call for the churches to continue their evangelistic efforts. The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message that has to be continually proclaimed by his people.

- Why do you suppose this particular lesson was chosen for Reformation Sunday? In what sense did the Reformation restore a renewed passion for the Gospel?
- When do you need to be reminded to share the Good News? Are there times and places that are more difficult than others?

Psalms 46

The psalmist’s refrain is like a cheer rippling through the congregation: “The God of Jacob is our fortress!” This God is one in whom we can trust for safety, security, and refuge. Even when storms and violence rage around us, we have a spiritual place to seek solace and comfort. The presence of the Lord in the lives of believers is the assurance that we will be protected in trying times and difficult situations.

- In what sense does the promise that “God is our refuge” assume that there are threats around us all the time?
- How do you “take refuge” in God in times of fear? In a practical sense, what does trusting God do for you when times are dark and frightening?

Romans 3:19–28

It is from the apostle Paul that Martin Luther received the

Reformation’s key doctrine: justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In speaking of *justification*, Scripture means that it is Jesus who *makes us right* with God through his sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, not by our own work or merit. Part of our lack of “rightness” with God comes from the fact that we assume we can attain holiness on our own.

- How would you describe what it means to be right with God?

Paul has made an argument in this portion of his letter that the Jews have an advantage because of their experience with God being his chosen children who received the commandments and the law. But then he goes on to say that even though they were chosen, God will judge all people according to our sin. The law cannot save us because we cannot keep the entirety of the law.

- What is the solution that God gave to humanity to save us all from the powers of sin and death? How is this not our own doing (not even a little bit)?
- Do you ever struggle with the way Paul sometimes refers to the law as a good thing and sometimes as a bad thing? (See Romans 7:12, 1 Cor. 7:19, and 1 Cor. 15:56.) How is this a paradox of faith?

John 8:31–36

Jesus taught the Jews who believed in him that if they would continue in his word, they were truly his disciples. Merely agreeing with what Jesus said wasn’t enough for him to count them as disciples. They had to be about what Jesus was about, not just in principle, but in word and deed.

- What does it mean to you to be a “disciple” of Jesus? What does it look like to be a true follower of Christ?
- Is this “works righteousness” when we talk about what Jesus expects of us?

Jesus went on to say that if the people knew the truth, the truth would set them free. But they didn’t even seem to understand what truth he was speaking of. Even though they should have remembered their ancestors’ captivity in Egypt, they declared that they had never been slaves to anyone. They weren’t thinking deeply enough.

- How does failing to acknowledge that we are “slaves to sin” keep us from experiencing God’s grace? In what sense does the truth of Jesus himself serve to free us from that slavery?
- Why do we confess that “we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves” at the same time we believe that we are set free in Christ. In this present world, how is our life always lived in the tension of both Saint and Sinner?