

**Picture of Martin Luther**

Reformation Sunday is an important Sunday for Lutherans. This year we are celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reformation. As a complete aside having nothing really to do with our message, did you know that the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary made it into the story line of one of my favorite shows, NCIS. They did not have the license plate of a vehicle, but what they did have was a 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bumper sticker. So I kid you not. In the show, they are trying to figure out if someone was kidnapped. And one of the person says something like, looks like we have to find a Lutheran.

Now what is comical about that, would anyone in our culture even know what a Lutheran is? Is a Lutheran someone who eats Lutefisk? If you are from the Minnesota, Lutherans may tell Oly and Lena jokes and say UfDa. By the way, Lutefisk stinks, I have tried it. Thee best description of it is fish jello. In full disclosure, how many hear have tried it Okay, keep your hands up, how many of you like it? It is an acquired taste, but there are those that can't get enough of it. So is being a Lutheran eating potlucks with shaved carrots in Jello, and saying that we come from Martin Luther. Actually if you want to know the truth, many, many people think we originate from Martin Luther King.

So what can we say then about Reformation, being a Lutheran and a deeper question, why does it matter? For many of us the Reformation can be summed up in the following:

**Luther reformed the church. He posted 95 thesis of correction. He claimed Word Alone, Christ Alone, Faith Alone and he broke away from the Catholic Church to form a new church called Lutheran.**

This is where we get a little smug and one of those deadly sins enter in. Yes, Luther pointed out the faults of the Christian church at the time. Isn't he a good guy and we are so glad he did what he did! Friends, to focus just on a simple historical, but true fact of history is to miss the whole point of the Reformation. I am going to let you in on a little secret. It has nothing to do with being Lutheran.

**Picture of young pastor giving a Sermon**

A story is told of a church who called a new pastor right out of seminary. He gave a really good first sermon. The people were happy. It looks like they made the right choice. Next Sunday to their amazement, he preached the exact same sermon. This was a little odd. Perhaps they thought, he had a busy week and this is all he could do. So they cut him some slack. The next Sunday he preached the exact same sermon again. Now not only was this strange, but they wondered if this guy was a little off. So the church council calls a meeting and they invite the pastor. Pastor why are you preaching the same exact sermon 3 weeks in a row. The pastor replies, well I am waiting on you to act on my message. When you do I will preach something else.

I want to introduce to you two very big theological words which I hope will help us to understand Reformation, our Gospel lesson and of course, Jesus.

**Orthopraxy vs Orthodoxy****Right practice vs right belief**

So right practice means that we are walking the walk. We are living our lives as disciples. It means we are loving our neighbor and love our Lord. Right belief is getting caught up into beliefs and doctrine.

So a right belief is that Jesus dies on the cross for our sins. That is a good belief and true. Yet how do we live out our lives as Christians? Does it mean that we can do anything we want? So right practice and right belief go hand in hand. What happens though is that too often we lose sight of practice in the face of right belief. To help explain that, let's look at John's lesson. We read in John 8:31

**"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free".**

Let's read this together. Now we have a mission statement that says we are Fed by the WORD. So we might think the first half is about reading the Bible more. After all, the Bible is what Luther used to change the world. It is part of Word Alone. And you might latch onto the word truth and say all we need to do is to have the right doctrine, the right way of thinking. The Jewish people were thinking wrong, and Jesus corrected their thinking. Friends, this really has nothing to do with that. Let's back up and ask the question, what it means to continue in my Word. What is the Word? Well the Word is embodied in Jesus. Recall the words of John 1, In the Beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The greek word for continue is the word Meno. It is the same word for Abide. Recall the scripture passages where Jesus says I am the vine you are the branches. Abide in Me. So to continue in the Word is to abide, to be connected, to be in relationship with Jesus. For a faith without Jesus is not a faith at all. It is words on paper, with no substance.

The whole purpose of the Reformation was a turning back to a relationship with Jesus. And what is the truth we are talking about? Recall the words of John 14:6

**"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me:**

So the truth is Jesus. The Word is Jesus. Abiding in Jesus is learning and living a faith of walking daily with our Lord. It is a melding of orthopraxy and orthodoxy. The truth is knowing, trusting and living, as free people because Jesus sets us free. Today we have an affirmation of faith by Karen Marie Knutson. Karen will affirm her faith and is invited to participate in practices that will deepen her faith. But, the goal is never the practices themselves. The goal is a walk with Jesus. Jesus makes us free because we no longer need to rely on ourselves for our salvation. The only thing we have to do is to rely on Jesus. It is as simple as that. So to help you understand, let's talk a bit about Communion.

We understand communion is forgiveness of sins. Which it is. Lutherans also believe that Jesus is present somehow in communion. So we get caught up into ways of doing things. We take communion every Sunday by intinction. We come forward, we eat wine and bread, and we leave and we have participated in the Lord's supper. But while we may have done the act, of eating and drinking, we miss the point of it all. Communion is a form of abiding. It is connecting if you will with Jesus. So did you ever think about the fact that if Jesus is present, right thinking, and if we abide in Jesus, that the same Jesus then goes with us when we leave this place. This means that as we live out our lives, from grocery shopping to taking a Sunday afternoon nap, this Jesus is with us. And whatever happens in our week, good or bad, Jesus can never ever be taken from us. To live that way, is to understand what it means to be free in Christ. That while things of this world, our worries, our concerns, all of the things we deal with are important, they are secondary to a life with Christ.

So to meld right practice with right belief, is to invite and live a life of walking with Jesus. And guess what, Jesus never ever ate Lutefisk. Amen.