



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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“Connecting People to Jesus”

VISITORS: Welcome!! Please sign our Guest Book and introduce yourself to Pastor Mark Griesse.

WE CELEBRATE HOLY COMMUNION 1st, 3rd & 5th SUNDAYS: Please see our Communion Statement on preceding page.

A NURSERY AND RESTROOM are located at the front of the sanctuary on the left hand side. Families with small children are welcome to use the nursery as needed.

ELEVATOR: We have an elevator for use as needed to get to the social hall. Please see an usher if you wish to use it.

WE GATHER OUR OFFERINGS FOR GOD’S WORK and the Elder of the day will take OUR YELLOW PRAYER REQUEST CARDS found in the Hymnal rack.

REFORMATION DAY

Observed: October 25, 2020



AS WE GATHER

To the consternation of His opponents, Jesus announced that those who abide in His Word know the truth, which sets them free. And the truth, Paul points out in the Epistle, is that God has declared us justified, not guilty under His Law, because of His gracious gift of faith in Christ. That gift frees us from fearing God's righteous wrath; we are confident that the Lord of hosts is with us. Sure of His presence and protection, we need not fear the forces of nature, the conflicts of people and nations, and the wiles of the devil. Rather, in all that we think, say, and do, we are free to respond to the angelic invitation we hear today: "fear God and give Him glory . . . and worship Him who made heaven and earth" (Revelation 14:7).

✠ PREPARATION ✠

HYMN

"The Church's One Foundation"

[LSB 644]



1 The Church's one foun - da - tion Is Je - sus Christ, her Lord;
2 E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, Yet one o'er all the earth;
3 Though with a scorn - ful won - der The world sees her op - pressed,
4 Through toil and trib - u - la - tion And tu - mult of her war



She is His new cre - a - tion By wa - ter and the Word.
Her char - ter of sal - va - tion: One Lord, one faith, one birth.
By schisms rent a - sun - der, By her - e - sies dis - tressed,
She waits the con - sum - ma - tion Of peace for - ev - er - more



From heav'n He came and sought her To be His ho - ly bride;
One ho - ly name she bless - es, Par - takes one ho - ly food,
Yet saints their watch are keep - ing; Their cry goes up, "How long?"
Till with the vi - sion glo - rious Her long - ing eyes are blest,



With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died.
And to one hope she press - es With ev - 'ry grace en - dued.
And soon the night of weep - ing Shall be the morn of song.
And the great Church vic - to - rious Shall be the Church at rest.

5 Yet she on earth has union
With God, the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won.
O blessèd heav'nly chorus!
Lord, save us by Your grace
That we, like saints before us,
May see You face to face.

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INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

OPENING SENTENCES

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

Pastor: God is our refuge and strength;

People: therefore we will not fear.

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

People: and are justified by His grace as a gift.

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

People: and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Incorporating Psalm 46:4, 7, 11

Pastor: Lord of hosts,

People: 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.

Pastor: 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.

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

KYRIE

Pastor: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord of hosts, have mercy.

Pastor: For those living in fear because of sudden disaster, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord of creation, have mercy.

Pastor: For those living in fear because of the evil intentions of people in power, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord of lords, have mercy.

Pastor: For those living in fear because of evil forces within the Church and oppression beyond it, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Christ, our Lord, have mercy.

Pastor: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

People: Amen.

SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray. Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

HYMN SING (The Congregation chooses hymns to sing)

✠ WORD ✠

FIRST READING

Revelation 14:6–7

(An angel announces the time for judgment.)

⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.”

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 46; antiphon: v. 7

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

Reader: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
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.

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

Reader: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
He utters his voice, the earth melts.

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

Reader: Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how He has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
He burns the chariots with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”

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

GRADUAL

Psalm 48:1a, 12–14a

Reader: Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God!
Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers,
consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels,
that you may tell the next generation

People: that this is God, our God forever and ever.

EPISTLE

Romans 3:19–28

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

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being^[a] will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL

John 8:31–36

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

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the eighth chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ³³ 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’?”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave^[a] to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

HYMN SING (The Congregation chooses hymns to sing)

Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32

I ask your indulgence at this reformation Service to hear a story from a few years ago. A couple of days before Reformation Day a woman called a minister to ask if that church's youth group would be interested in Trick or Treating for UNICEF of the last Sunday in October at such-and-such a time. The pastor replied that the youth would be unable to participate because that church was taking part in a big Reformation Service then. There was a pause, and then the caller said, "You are the third Lutheran Pastor I've talked to today who said they were having a Reformation Day service on that day. Do you Protestants always schedule Reformation Day around Halloween?" With a smile the pastor replied, "No, Halloween is always scheduled around Reformation Day!"

Maybe the woman had a point, though. The observance of Halloween--All Hallows' Eve, the night before All Saint's Day--did precede the observance of Reformation Day. In fact, that was preceded by pagan folk observances in Britain and Ireland to mark the end of summer, on October 31. Festivities included the building of large bonfires, the return of the herds from the pastures, and the renewal of laws and land agreements. Popular belief was that the soul of dead people came back to their homes on that day as well.

Consequently, the church came to celebrate that day as a time to remember the faithful sisters and brothers who had died. And that's part of our focus next week, when we celebrate All Saints' Sunday.

Nowadays Halloween features not so much a time of the souls of dead people, but characters like Freddy Kruger or creatures from outer space who come to the house and say, "Trick or Treat!" And that line--"Trick or Treat!"--is helpful for us to think about as we reflect on the lessons for today.

Most of us would rather have treats than tricks played on us. The treat we have as Christians against the tricks of the world is the Good News of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther, in Theses #62 of the famous Ninety-Five, wrote, "The true treasure of the church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God." Now what does that mean?

Well, it's like this. The Law, which is a record of those things we are supposed to do, demands complete fulfillment. It's like an older brother or

sister who would say, "Go out trick-or-treating and bring me back your bag." You come back; they empty it out on the floor and survey it--lots of apples, gift certificates, candy, money, stickers--and they say, "It's not enough; go get some more." So you do, dump it out on the floor, and once again the response is, "It's not enough." This routine goes on and on, until you realize it will never ever be enough. The Law can never be fully satisfied.

On the other hand, the Gospel--the Good News, "the treasure of the church"--is God saying, "Hold out your bag wide open, for I have lots of good gifts to give you." And then they start to come, and pretty soon the bag is overflowing. We have received more than we ever thought possible. Let's take the Trick or Treat picture and apply it to the Scripture readings for this Reformation festival. In the reading from Jeremiah we heard about a new covenant.

A trick the world often plays on us, and we are pretty good playing it on each other, is our inability to forgive, or at least our lack of energy when it comes to forgiveness. Sometimes the person we find hardest to forgive is ourselves.

That's how it was for Martin Luther. Until he learned that forgiveness is a treat, not a trick. Through Jeremiah God promises that he will remember our sin no more. Think about that. What a change in thinking that promise invites us to share! The God who knows our names, who watches over even the sparrows, has each of our hairs numbered, this God knows every one of our failures, every one of our misdeeds, every broken promise.

Since "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," that can be a frightening thought, a real Halloween scare. With that kind of accounting system, God must have a record of every thought, act, feeling, unkind word. There is no way to escape the scrutiny of God.

But God promises to forgive! Just as he was able to remember his covenants to people like Abraham and David, so he promises to forget our sinfulness. And his forgetfulness is total and absolute. The expression that "the slate is clean" used the image of a blackboard. In this age of computers, we might try to express it by saying that our sins have been deleted from the program through the input of Christ's death and resurrection. a typical computer program asks, "Do you really want to delete this?" The user indicates YES. The program asks again, "But do you really, really want to delete this?" again the answer is YES. Finally, it declares, "Okay, but it will

be deleted for good if you push the button." The button is pushed and the file is deleted. I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more."

St. Paul's words from the letter to the Romans remind us of a favorite trick of ours. We are taught from little on to strive for independence. A child just beams to be able to say, "Look, I did this all by myself." Sometimes we get so caught up in having to do things by ourselves that we imagine we can somehow do without the help of God, that the many great things we can do might make things right between ourselves and God.

It has been pointed out that in printing (like the word processing programs on our computers) to justify means to arrange the letters in such a way that all the full lines are of equal length and flush both left and right. In other words, the printed lines are put in the right relationship with the page they are printed on and with each other. The religious use of the word is very close to this. Being justified means being brought into a right relationship with God and with our fellow man.

"It is God who justifies," the Bible says, God who makes us right with himself and with one another.

Jesus told his disciples that those who continue in his word will know the truth, and the truth will make us free. We are Americans," we are tempted to reply, following the examples of the ancient children of Abraham. "We haven't ever been in bondage, how can you say we will be made free?" The Lord's reply pointed out the trick with which people can so easily deceive themselves. Whoever sins is a slave to sin. But if the son makes you free, you will be free indeed." What a treat from God!

Another trick remains. The temptation to doubt the Lord's promise and to think and act as though we are not free. Maybe you have noticed youngsters in their Halloween costumes sometimes feeling bound by them. The anonymity of a mask is supposed to bring freedom, but instead the youngster finds it stifling and constricting in there.

But the freedom, the treat, we have from Jesus is that we are free to take the masks we wear off, and get rid of them. We need not live as slaves to sin, to fear, but as the very children of God. What a treat to know that we don't have to go begging, pretending to be something we are not and can never be. Jesus sets us free to be what he has made us by his grace, the children of God. No trick here, because this is the truth, God's own truth, that sets us free.

CATECHISM *Incorporating Psalm 46 and the Apostles' Creed*

Pastor: Our faith is in God the Father, the almighty Creator of all that exists. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way.

People: **I believe in God, the Father almighty, who has made me and all creatures. He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.**

Pastor: Our faith is in God the Son, whose sacrifice on the cross opens to us eternal life in God's eternal presence. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;

People: **I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.**

Pastor: Our faith is in God the Holy Spirit, whose gift of faith gives us eternal peace with God. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; He burns the chariots with fire.

People: **I believe in the Holy Spirit, who in the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.**

OFFERING TO THE LORD'S WORK IS GATHERED

(Offering should be placed in the offering plate at the door)

HYMN SING (The Congregation chooses hymns to sing)

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.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Matthew 6:9–13)

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

BENEDICTION

Pastor: 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. *Numbers 6:24–26*
People: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” [LSB 657]



1 A might - y for - tress is our God, A sword and shield vic -
2 No strength of ours can match his might. We would be lost, re -
3 Though hordes of dev - ils fill the land All threat-'ning to de -
4 God's Word for - ev - er shall a - bide, No thanks to foes, who



to - rious; He breaks the cruel op - pres - sor's rod And wins sal -
ject - ed. But now a cham-pion comes to fight, Whom God Him -
vour us, We trem - ble not, un - moved we stand; They can - not
fear it; For God Him-self fights by our side With weap-ons



va-tion glo - rious. The old sa - tan - ic foe Has sworn to
 self e - lect - ed. You ask who this may be? The Lord of
 o - ver-pow'r us. Let this world's ty - rant rage; In bat - tle
 of the Spir - it. Were they to take our house, Goods, hon - or,



work us woe. With craft and dread - ful might He
 hosts is He, Christ Je - sus, might - y Lord, God's
 we'll en - gage. His might is doomed to fail; God's
 child, or spouse, Though life be wrenched a - way, They



arms him - self to fight. On earth he has no e - qual.
 on - ly Son, a - dored. He holds the field vic - to - rious.
 judg - ment must pre - vail! One lit - tle word sub - dues him.
 can - not win the day. The King - dom's ours for - ev - er!

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