

Reformation Still Matters

Paul teaches in Ephesians 2:8 *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

In a time when many of us feel afraid and discouraged by all the chaos that swirls around us, we might ask: What can I do? Can my voice even be heard in the middle of all the madness and mayhem? Can I really say anything that will make a difference?

Over 500 years ago, there was one person who put God’s agenda above the cultural agendas of the day and protested mainstream thinking.

Today we reflect on the Reformation of the 16th century that changed Christianity forever. Roused to action by the corruption and abuses in his world culture, Martin Luther dug deeper into the New Testament book of Romans to find that if we are ever going to please God, we need a radical inner transformation, worked in us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit’s presence and power fell upon that bold action. It was a movement that would usher in the transformation of the church.

Just as Luther was faced with tearing down the idols that stood in the way of God’s rightful place in his life, we are faced with that very same challenge in the church of the 21st century. The problem with our country today is not that God has turned away, but that we turn too quickly from Him to all the worldly things that take His place. We are a nation of many idols. Even religion can become an idol when we go through the motions and rituals, but our hearts remain distant from God. (Isaiah 29:13) Worship becomes as comfortable as going to the movies--- to see your friends, be entertained, and even get a snack at intermission.

Have we lost sight of our purpose? Keeping social distance from God.

Have we set aside our mission? For convenience and comfort.

We live in a tumultuous time---so did Luther. It didn’t stop him from seeking Christ *first* and putting God at the center of his life. Now is *our* time. We’ve been set in this generation to “nail” our own declaration of faith to the door of our hearts, homes and communities. God isn’t looking for trained theologians as much as He is looking for brave hearts ready to declare their devotion. Ready to proclaim to the world, ***“I love Jesus Christ---with my whole heart.”***

The Reformation still matters. As Christ-followers, we are constantly being reformed---by God’s WORD-- *Sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone. It is not a movement forward to some uncharted horizon, but a continual movement *back* to God’s Word.

If you want to make a difference, keep your heart set on God’s agenda. Like Luther’s bold words that confronted sin, your straight-forward statement of God’s love and grace and the power of the Holy Spirit will transform lives as well. Or maybe even transform a nation.

It is our prayer today that we all will stand and testify of our unwavering love for Jesus. That we proclaim our devotion to the LORD without compromise and humbly seek His face in thanksgiving for the gift of grace--- immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.

---The Prayer Team, Hope Lutheran Church