



The Text that Made Martin Luther...& Makes US!

Considering a Message from Romans 1:17
For the Week of October 28th, 2018

This weekend we've observed the Festival of Reformation. It commemorates Luther's nailing of the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31st, 1517. This event is considered to be the start of the Reformation. As we celebrate the Festival of the Reformation, we are directing our glorifying and praise to God. We are not glorifying Luther or the Lutheran Church or any branch of the Lutheran Church. Our purpose is to thank and praise God for directing His people back to the clear teachings of His Word, which proclaims His free grace handed to us as a gift won and purchased by the work of Christ Jesus, coming to us BY FAITH. Because of the forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life that God freely gives to those who trust in Him, we have the motivation to Love God back. We strive to serve Him—not because we are coerced or threatened to do so, but as a joyful reaction to the love we first have received from Him. This realization of the Gospel which then produces good works was essential to Luther's development and to the Reformation in general. Salvation is NOT about what WE DO—it is all about what God DOES for us! Glory be to God that He has done this great work in winning our salvation for us!

Opening Prayer: We thank You Heavenly Father for bringing us together. Send Your Holy Spirit to help us grow in faith and love, especially as we gather together with our fellow Christians. Help us to always appreciate the wonderful Gospel message that our forgiveness and salvation is freely provided for us through the life, death, and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ; and that it is available to all by faith. Help us to appreciate this gift and give us opportunities to respond to this gift with joy and thanksgiving throughout our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

CONNECT to Each Other

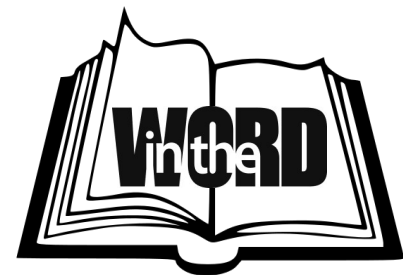
Take a few moments to greet each other—especially anyone who might be new or unfamiliar to the people in your group. Introduce yourselves again if anyone is unfamiliar with anyone else, give an interesting factoid about yourself that not many people know...

1. Have you ever had an “AHA!” moment?—Where something suddenly made sense to you that had not been clear before? What was it? Please share... **ANSWERS WILL VARY/SUBJECTIVE—PERHAPS IT WAS SOMETHING LIGHT, SILLY, OR HUMOROUS—MAYBE A DEEP THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING WAS MADE CLEAR...**

CONNECT to the Word—Read the Bible text together (also consider its context): **Romans 1:16-17**

2. Today we hear about an important “AHA!” moment that Luther had because of Romans 1:17b. What did Luther take away/learn/clarify/“AHA!” from the six words of this passage? **LUTHER DESCRIBED IT AS IF HE “HAD BEEN REBORN AND ENTERED PARADISE!” IT MADE A BIG IMPACT ON HIM—BEFORE HE HATED “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD” THINKING THIS WAS SOMETHING HE HAD TO ACHIEVE FOR HIMSELF IN ORDER TO GET TO HEAVEN...HE REALIZED HOW IMPOSSIBLE THIS WAS... BUT THIS SIMPLE VERSE HELPED HIM UNDERSTAND THAT THIS “RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD” IS GIVEN TO ALL WHO SIMPLY HAVE FAITH IN GOD! IT'S NOT ABOUT WHAT WE DO—BUT WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US THAT WE ARE SAVED!**
3. Throughout Martin Luther's life we see different attitudes about God and his own relationship to God. As a boy, how did Luther see God? ...Then as a teenager? ...Then as a priest? ...Then as he posted the 95 Theses? ...Then as one under attack for his bold stand? ...Then finally on his deathbed? **AS A BOY: GOD IS ANGRY JUDGE OUT TO GET HIM!...AS TEEN: GOD IS SOMEONE HE NEEDS TO BE RIGHT WITH! WILL BE STANDING BEFORE HIM SOON!...AS A PRIEST: HARD AT WORK**

TO MAKE HIMSELF ACCEPTABLE TO GOD!...AS POSTING THE 95 THESES: GOD'S FREE LOVE AND FORGIVENESS CANNOT BE FOR SALE!...AS UNDER ATTACK: STANDING UPON THE GOSPEL AND RELYING UPON GOD'S GRACE IS THE ONLY PLACE WE CAN BE!...ON HIS DEATHBED: "GOD HAS REVEALED JESUS AS MY SAVIOR. I BELIEVE IN HIM. I HAVE ETERNAL LIFE!"



- Throughout the sermon there were other verses, sections, biblical examples, and hymns given that emphasize how our salvation is all about God's Work and not our own. Review and discuss your favorite verses, hymns, and other examples (from the sermon and others that you know) that emphasize this. **ANSWERS WILL VARY: "JESUS LOVES ME THIS I KNOW;" GALATIANS 3:11,13; 1 PETER 3:18; ROMANS 4:25-5:1; GALATIANS 2:16; 1 PETER 1:18-19; 3RD ARTICLE OF THE CREED; GENESIS 15:6, ROMANS 4:3; EXAMPLES OF ABRAHAM, DAVID, & PAUL; JOHN 3:16!**

CONNECT to Life

- Sometimes "Faith" is treated as something WE need to do in order to be saved. This is emphasized in some churches that say you need to know a specific *moment* when you "*Came to Jesus*" or where you made some "*Decision to follow Christ*"—otherwise you can't be sure of your salvation. How would you respond to this? Is "*Faith*" something WE need *TO DO* in order to be saved? Explain... **SEE SECTION IN SERMON ABOUT "FAITH" BEING THE EMPTY HAND THAT HOLDS THE GIFT—ALSO WE UNDERSTAND THAT FAITH ITSELF IS WORKED BY GOD—NOT BY OURSELVES!**
- How do you respond to those who say that our understanding of the Gospel and of God's Grace is "too cheap and easy"? What makes anyone strive to be better or to be a good person? **LOOK AT THE LUTHER—CERTAINLY NOT REFLECTED AS CHEAP OR EASY—IT MOVED HIM TO HEROICS. SAME WITH OTHER HEROES OF THE FAITH. IN REALITY IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO LOVE OR DO ANYTHING THAT IS "GOOD" IN GOD'S EYES IF WE DON'T FIRST KNOW THE LOVE HE HAS FOR US—IF WE DON'T FIRST KNOW THE GOSPEL. OUR MOTIVATION MUST COME FROM GOD'S GIFT OF THE GOSPEL—THAT IS WHY WE SEEK TO LET GOOD WORKS BE REFLECTED THROUGH US! 1 JOHN 4:19**
- As stated in the sermon, Luther had a motto or mantra that he would continue to tell himself that kept him going in spite of challenges and difficulties....Come up with and share your own motto/mantra that would keep you going—focused on God and on the Love He has for you? **REVIEW LUTHER'S MOTTO/MANTRA—ANSWERS FOR OUR OWN WILL VARY—HOPE ALL ARE GOSPEL & CHRIST FOCUSED/CENTERED.**
- How did the hymns, other lessons, parts of the service, etc. fit together with the Sermon message and overall theme for the day? **VARIOUS ANSWERS—OBVIOUSLY THE WHOLE SERVICE IS DESIGNED TO BE A COHESIVE UNIT/SINGLE THEME.**

CONNECT in Prayer—*In closing & throughout the week!*

- PLEASE OFFER PRAYERS of Thanks that we have God's Gospel message full and free in our midst! AND that we might not ever take it for granted, but treasure, preserve, and share this message of Justification by Faith!
- PRAY for the ongoing work of our Building Project and for those working on our project.
- PRAY for our newborn babies (especially the two whose Baptisms are being Affirmed this week in church) and for the expecting mothers of our church.
- PRAY for your Pastors and the work they do—the Teachers of our school—the other Staff Members and Volunteers that serve in a variety of ways at Mt. Olive!
- PRAY for Missionaries here in America and throughout the World that our church and Evangelical Lutheran Synod support.
- PRAY for any other special requests or needs of the people in your group!

