

Reformation Sunday
Confirmation Sunday 2022

It's Reformation Sunday! What, no applause? No shouts for joy? Let's try that again. It's Reformation Sunday! When you think about Reformation Sunday, what comes to mind? Martin Luther. The knock heard around the world as Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the church doors in Wittenberg, Germany on October 31, 1517. Grace alone. Faith alone. Christ alone. Luther's most famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," we sang earlier. Freedom from, freedom for. All these would be good responses. Did anyone think of the priesthood of all believers?

I suspect few of you did. Maybe, you have never even heard of that term. It would become a dominant theological doctrine of the Reformation. Not only by Luther, but other Reformers such as John Calvin. Based on scripture, specifically 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) that states, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Luther, Calvin, and other reformers contended that through Christ each believer is open to a relationship with God.

But having been baptized into Christ, each Christian was a priest. They were chosen by God, made holy, and set aside to live out the baptismal vocation of proclaiming Christ in the world. Shining his light. Extending his love. Being vessels of forgiveness and peace. Striving for justice. Being agents of grace. In short, being Christ to one another. Luther says as much in his treatise, *The Freedom of a Christian*.ⁱ

Surely we are named after Christ, not because he is absent from us, but because he dwells in us, that is, because we believe in him and are Christ to one another and do to our neighbor as Christ has done to us.

Therefore, each of you is a priest in this regard. Each of you is Christ to another. This week, as I read and further reflected on your papers, Aizlyn and Jacob, your words proclaimed the gospel of Christ to me. You were his light shining through the darkness. In what was a hard week, you were his voice and his presence when I needed it most. So, I say thank you!

Aizlyn, you wrote, "I know that he [God] will help me through dark times in my life. I know he will always be there for me." You proclaimed the promise revealed repeatedly throughout all of scripture. God is faithful to God's people. God is with us always. In the highs and lows of life in the flesh.

And Jacob, you reminded me of the power of prayer and how God is at work through prayer helping us draw closer to him and set our sights yet again on him, his will, and the goodness that comes through God as you wrote, "Prayer is a way to talk to God. Prayer helps me be thankful for the things I have."

Never, ever doubt that God is at work in and through you. Your words, actions, and deeds. Never doubt that Christ dwells in you. He shines through you. He is alive through you.

Reformation Sunday calls us to ponder the many ways in which God continue God's ongoing activity in Christ's church. I think of God's continued presence with the people God loves and created. His ongoing work in the lives of sinners, but also saints having been clothed with the garment of Christ's innocence in and through the baptismal waters in which "sin is washed away" as Jacob wrote. I think of the Holy Spirit being poured out,

reconciling, drawing near, and growing us ever deeper, closer, fuller, and richer into a relationship with our Lord and Savior.

Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation) Sunday fits with Reformation Sunday. What is happening in the lives of these confirmands? God is at work. The Holy Spirit is present continuing her work to form you, shape you and grow you into Christ's disciples. The baptismal waters continue to flow with the promise of grace. Forgiveness. Salvation. Hope. New life. As Aizlyn wrote, "To be baptized into Jesus Christ's death and resurrection means that if we enter his death through baptism, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead would raise us up as well."

The baptismal font is front and center this morning and it is filled with water that we can see, touch, and feel on our skin. The God of love acts through water. At the dawn of creation God separated water from sky and brought forth land from the waters that previously had symbolized chaos. In what might be the most pivotal event in the Old Testament and God's people, God who is faithful delivered God's people through the waters of the Red Sea into a new land in which they were free from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh in Egypt. And then, into the waters of Jordan river, Jesus too was baptized and heard from above, "You are my son, with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22)

His baptism made known his identity. His baptism filled him with the Holy Spirit. His baptism was a visible, tangible sign of God's grace. God's love. God's will. It was God's word, the Holy Spirit's presence, and the promises of whose he was, that went with Jesus into the wilderness to overcome the temptations of Satan.

Thus today, as you affirm the promises made before God on behalf of your parents and sponsors, God yet again affirms his promises to you. I invite you both to stand around the font. Aizlyn, Jacob you are a beloved child of God. The God of grace unconditionally and eternally loves you. You are forgiven. You are will never be alone." (Mark each with sign of cross)

Thank you both for being present in class. Thank you for being present in worship. Thank you for all the gifts you bring to our congregation. Thank you for simply being you, beautifully, wonderfully, and lovingly created by God. Thank you for your words of faith. They are words of the Holy Spirit that lives in each of you. It is clear to see.

Thank you, Scott and Amber! Thank you, Tara and Scott! For faithfully living out the baptismal promises you made on the day of your child's baptism and, with the help of God, lead them yet again to the waters of baptism. Thank you for the love of God that lives in each of you, is reflected through your love for another and poured out into your children and into the world.

Thank you sponsors. Grandparents. Aunts and uncles and all others who accompany these two below, precious children of God on their continued journey of faith and walk with their Lord and Savior.

Thank you, people of God, for the ways in which you too have been instrumental in their faith formation. Revealing grace. Proclaiming Christ. Shining light. Quite simply, being the body of Christ, priesthood of all believers, and doing God's holy work.

ⁱ Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*; from *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings Second Edition*; edited by Timothy F. Lull; Fortress Press, Minneapolis, copyright 2005 Augsburg Fortress; p. 406.