

Reformation Sunday 2022

Often on reformation Sunday we talk about the vast global, history-changing significance of the reformation. And rightly so. The Augsburg Confession and the edict of the emperor changed history. It changed the world. One billion people even now worship in Churches that came out of the reformation. The significance of the reformation theologically and politically cannot be overstated.

However, the reformation is at the very same time highly, highly individual. Even as it started by one individual who just wanted to go to heaven. And maybe that is a selfish reason, and one we could ask ourselves? Do we just worship God because of what it gets us? Eternal life and a spot in his kingdom? Or is there more to it? Is it also because we believe he is Good and Just and Merciful and longs for us to be with him? Is it also because he deserves praise because of his power and love?

But that is precisely what Luther struggled with. He thought God was the bad guy. The mean guy who said, “shape up or else!” He was a taskmaster. He was a judge. He was always looking for that fault. The one you did outwardly. Or, if you managed to reign those in, he would look inward and you better believe he would find fault there somewhere. And so Luther was scared of him, and tried his best to bargain with God, manipulate God? So He tried his best, he became a monk, and he was a really good monk too! He went days without food. He hit himself, he

spent hours in the Bible and confessing his sins. He deprived himself so much that some believe his illnesses later in life were because of how harshly he treated himself. “Maybe God will like me now!” But no, there was always, always some sinful motivation and selfish reason to do it all. And he knew it. And what was worse, as he is having this inner conflict what is he doing? He’s teaching others. He’s preaching. What a hypocrite. And so he was depressed, he was scared, he doubted the goodness of God and his value.

And so the reformation did not come out of a thirst for power, or a political fight. It came because someone was scared, and the Gospel, the Gospel he found in the scriptures, finally gave him some hope. A whole lot of it, actually. Luther said, “If Jesus died for me and my sins, then I do not own them, I am free.”

Did you hear the “my” and “me” and the “I” in there? The Gospel was for him! The Hope, the eternal life, for him! And it wasn’t manipulated, and it wasn’t even selfish because of the admission that it was undeserved. It was his because God wanted to give it to him. And do you see that? God isn’t the bad guy anymore. He is the Giver! This is the Gospel. The Gospel in a vacuum is no gospel at all. Good News for nobody isn’t good news at all. The Gospel, the Good News, is the gospel when it is saving, when it is bringing freedom and hope to sinners who need it.

We all know John 3:16 “For God so loved the world.” But it’s easy to think of others who it may be for. “That person over there who is better than me. Or that person who has less doubts.” We can think of a bunch of other people in the world that good things happen to but not us, never really happens to us, does it? No! Are you in the world? Then it is for you, rejoice in it.

Then, yes, turn to your neighbor and realize it is for them, individually too. And so not only did an individual’s conscience and struggle with God start the reformation. It fueled it as he saw others needing the same beautiful message. But not in a vacuum, this message went out to actual people, individuals, who Jesus loved. Here are two letters he sent to others who were struggling, thinking God was the bad guy out to get them.

(Read the 2 letters)

Real Gospel, a real Savior, for real people. And even more as he saw the poor people putting their last coins into the coffers to buy indulgences. His heart went out to them so he stood against the paying for grace and pointed even more to the cross where the price was paid for them.

Which is why on reformation day, sure we talk about Luther, but how can we not talk about the Savior Jesus even more. The reformation is about Him, far more than Luther. Jesus’ Work, His saving death and resurrection, sure it is for the

world, but you know what that means right, it means it was for you, individually even as you are a part of the world. Jesus. For You.

You are a sinner. You are not righteous enough to earn salvation. But Jesus is. And he has taken your place on a cross, so you might take his place in the Kingdom.

You are not strong enough to beat death. He is. And he has shown that strength in his resurrection – this is not just lip service – and has promised to you that he will raise you up. His death is your death, his resurrection is yours. And the reformation is a celebration of that Work and Word coming to you in the clearest possible way.

No fees. No manipulation. Just a Gospel truth that changed the world, but never forget: it changes your life too.