

Reformation Sunday 2009

NIV Jeremiah 18:11 "Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.'

NIV Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth-- to every nation, tribe, language and people.

NIV Mark 13:9 "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.

Stand Your Gospel Ground!

Reform your ways

Trust your Changeless Good News

My fellow believers standing together on the Word of God for our trusty shield and weapon against the old evil foe, scowl fierce as he will, he's judged, the deed is done – one little Word can fell him.

Introduction: 1530 Diet of Augsburg, 1521 Diet of Worms, 1517 "The 95 Theses". Reformation Sunday is a time for us to celebrate God's gracious patience. In spite of humanities disrespect of the Lord and His Simple Word, the Lord blessed the world by preserving and protecting His Gospel of pure grace. To accomplish the preserving of His Word from man's words and fairy tales, the Lord used men and woman to stand up and confess their faith in God's Word even at the risk of their own lives. Martin Luther was one of these valuable tools in the Lord's hands to rally and reform His people with His powerful Gospel. Martin Luther himself was a sinner with many failings and weaknesses but in spite of his sinfulness he was an effective tool in God's hands to change God's people, to bring about a change back to God's ways and God's work.

Martin Luther's bag of bones lies in a grave in Germany along with the rest of the German princes and courageous believers who found God's mercy in Scripture alone, through Faith alone, all by God's Grace alone. Their souls rest secure in heaven with the God who gave up his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for their sins. Today though, we stand alone, without Martin Luther, the German princes and the rest of the courageous men and woman of the Lutheran Reformation to stand up for us, for our families and for our congregation. It is our turn – our time – our opportunity, to stand up for the good news of Jesus Christ, reform our ways and trust in the eternal changeless gospel for our salvation and the salvation of our families! Stand your Gospel Ground!

The last week of Jesus life was filled with a great many teachings for his disciples of all times – none are more studied in our day than his words concerning the end times of this sinful world. Jesus was leaving the temple area in Jerusalem when one of his disciples pointed out the great architecture and beautiful carvings of stone in the temple complex. Jesus seized the opportunity to refocus his disciples to the one unchanging and one and only important foundation for his people – the good news of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of God's Chosen One –the Messiah.

Jesus' revelation about the future wasn't a pretty one for his disciples. Jesus reminds us that the end times that we live in are dangerous. Peace and safety will be fleeting. Buildings and places of worship will be overturned. Famine and wars are commonplace. His description is a world in turmoil, in constant upheaval and change. God's people will be under constant pressure even to the point of being executed.

Since Adam and Eve were joined in marriage, the Devil has been attacking God's Word with the sole intent and purpose to destroy the peace and joy people have with their God. His attack in the Garden of Eden was the same in the 1500's and it is the same today, "Did God really say?" Adam and Eve fell to his lies about being right with God the same way The Christian church fell to his lies. The Devil questioned God's Word, Eve was tripped up and Adam remained silent, saying and doing nothing. After the apostles entered into heaven, slowly overtime when the devil would come out and attack God's Word about Jesus Christ, "Did God really say..." whole groups of believers started turning away from God's Word for their answers and turning towards men in the larger cities. People started to defer, remaining silent, doing nothing and leaving God's Word up to one man, who was the head of the biggest group of believers at that time which happened to be in Rome. The deferring and preferential treatment was too much and over time these bishops started to believe they were more important than God's Word itself and even believed they were appointed to speak for Christ. They added their opinions to God's Word and held the whole of God's people under slavery to their rules and laws. They took salvation away from God's Gospel and put it into their man made laws of obedience, self

sacrifice and human designed good works, even inventing a place to do them after death called purgatory. How could this happen? How could believers in Christ follow the words of a man instead of those of Christ?

Simply put – Someone did nothing – Someone deferred. Someone wasted their opportunities. For the most part, I consider myself to be health conscious. I try to eat right, exercise, and stay in moderation with the goodies (adult or child forms). But there is one thing that gives me a stomach ache – regret, wasted chances. This past week the family was looking over photo albums and someone said, “Where’s Chris in all these pictures.” Oh what regret I have when I think of the fact that something could happen to one of my children and will simply have to say, I was too busy to remind them of forgiveness, too busy to read a Bible story about Jesus love for them, too busy to read a portion of scripture that reminds them that they are God’s precious creation with unique gifts and abilities for his family work. I still wake up in the middle of the night, thinking of the time in the championship game when I went down on a punt return because I was afraid of getting hurt. I could’ve broken that tackle. I had some strength left I didn’t use. I hate myself for that. I can see it still when I looked up-only one more man to beat with my friends in line to block for me. But I went down, afraid. Regret. A wasted chance. Let me ask you this, “How many dollars do you have in your checking account?” Do you know? Why or why not? Parenting Magazine says their poll tells them 35% of Parents surveyed don’t know how much money they have. Should we not be wise with our budgets to take every opportunity to proclaim the gospel in our homes, villages and country? When it comes to a few dollars or a simple football game or a couple minutes with our kids, it’s not that big of a deal right? Do you realize what is at stake if we continue to waste our chances to stand our gospel ground? The devil may not be able to take away your faith in Jesus Christ, but what about next year, when your bag of bones is decaying in the grave? Will your children give a little more gospel ground? All of us need a reformation, a changing of our ways and actions. It is called repentance. Turn to the Lord and confess your wasted opportunities with me every day – our wasted time, our wasted funds and our wasted abilities. Then look up at the cross and know that Jesus Christ seized every opportunity, wasted no expense and used his life to save us. We are forgiven. The Lord is not angry with us. He is there to help us and encourage us to take the opportunity to share his love. Stand Your Gospel Ground with me at St. Luke’s for our Lord and for our families and for the future generations of God’s people. Amid all the turmoil, persecution and change in this sinful world, Jesus held out for his disciples the one thing that they could count on, cling to and stand on that would never change – The good news of God’s love through the Messiah.

The Lord points his disciples to the one thing constant for their comfort – God’s eternal unchanging gospel – the good news of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, the lamb who was slain. That good news is for all time for all people from the 4 corners of the globe. It will not be changed. It will not be toppled. It will not be overcome by the devil, this world or any sinner. “The Word they still shall let remain, nor any thanks have for it.” Jesus gave us an everlasting picture of the changeless gospel in Revelation. God sent one of his messengers to hold out the eternal gospel for every nation, tribe language and people. No matter how bad this world gets, no matter how fierce the devil howls his lies, no matter what evil governments may do to God’s people, the gospel will be preached. The message of God’s love will ring out for the peace, comfort and joy of believers in the midst of this evil world.

These past couple weeks a few of you have discovered something about me – I’m not the savior. I grow impatient. I lose my temper. I get tired and irritable. I don’t meet your expectations or needs. I’m sorry for not being a better pastor. But I’m also happy more of you are realizing, I’m not the answer to the health of St. Luke’s or the future of St. Luke’s School. Put your trust in the changeless gospel. What great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God – And that is what we are! Trust that changeless good news. It still holds true today just as it did in the Garden of Eden after the fall, in Worms after Luther stood on the gospel promise, in Augsburg after the German princes defied the Holy Roman Emperor and held to the gospel and today. Our peace, comfort joy and future as God’s people depend on where we are in relation to that changeless good news.

Martin Luther was a very religious man. In his younger years he tried with all his energy to please God and do His Will – he worked and prayed and sacrificed all his possessions, using all his time and abilities to please God and gain his blessings. But he did not find God’s love in those things. Luther was far away from where God’s love and blessings lie. When he dove into the Word of God and the life, death and resurrection of

Jesus Christ he was close and nearby to God's love and blessings – the Word of God. There in the Word he found God's favor and blessings. There close by the Word of God he found his strength and courage to seize the chances he was given to stand up on the Gospel for his own soul, for his family and for his countrymen and for all of Christendom. How close are you to the Gospel? Where are you in relation to God's good news? Stay close and find the courage, strength and bravery to trust and stand on that good news for yourself, your family and maybe for the generations of believers to come.