

Sunday, October 25, 2020
Reformation Sunday
Grace Lutheran Church
Somers Point, NJ 08244
Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf
“To Be Continued”



I am a work in progress, spiritually, mentally, and physically. One step at a time and one day at a time. "Inch by inch it will be a cinch" a Robert Shuller's progress saying. He had many which were printed on a postcard and it's somewhere; however, this one seems small enough to remember. My mantra in remembering Reformation, "We are saved by God's Grace through Faith in Christ Jesus."

Today we celebrate the power of God's Grace to reform and reshape our lives and the life of the church. The great twentieth century theologian Karl Barth said, "The Church must always be reformed." I invite you to consider the work of continuing Reformation each day in your faith journey.

First let's consider from the Lutheran Handbook five important things the Lutheran reformers wrote or translated and why they are important today. One - the Augsburg Confession the place (Augsburg) where the Reformers defended their teachings (Confessions) on how they talked about God's love for sinners. Two - the Small and Large Catechisms. Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism so families would have a handy summary of the Christian Faith, and he wrote the Large Catechism so Pastors could learn to preach so that people would have faith. I think I need to brush up on this by adding it to my devotions. Three- Luther's "September Testament" translating the New Testament from Latin into German (first edition printed in September 1522). No matter what language someone speaks, God's Word can still proclaim freedom in Christ to them. Four - after Luther died, his Followers argued about what his teachings really meant. For thirty years (reform in progress) they fought about how God's Law works, whether we have free will, and what happens in the Lord's Supper. They settled these issues and published their agreement-The Formula of Concord (unity). It was for preachers and teachers to know how to do their work so people can hear what Christ has done for them. Five- sermons...changing preaching to focus on proclaiming the Gospel, Luther and the Reformers hoped to make sure God's promises could be freed to inspire people of faith.

I came upon another one of Luther's prayers, interesting fashion perspective, "Lord, what you do not do....remains undone. If you will not help, I will gladly surrender. The cause is not mine. I will happily

be your mask and disguise if only you will do the work." Amen. Again Luther said, "Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's Grace. It is so sure and certain that a person could stake one's life on it a thousand times!" Romans 3: 19-28 stand at the heart of Luther's preaching and other reformers. No human beings make themselves right with God through works of the law. The law says, "Do this," and "it's never done." Grace say, "believe in this and everything is already done." A life free to serve others begins with this. No matter how well you keep the law, only the free gift of the Gospel can save you!

Hans Sachs 1494-1576 wrote a popular summary of the theology of Luther, "The Wittenberg Nightingale"

Luther teaches that we all
Are involved in Adam's fall.
If one beholds oneself within,
One feels the bite and curse of sin.
When dread, despair, and terror seize,
Contrite one falls upon one's knees.
Then breaks for one the light of day.
Then the Gospel may have sway.
Then sees one, Christ, of God the Son,
Who for us all things has done.
The law fulfilled, the debt paid
Death overcome, the curse allayed.
He'll destroy, the devil bound,
Grace for us with God has found.
Christ the Lamb, removes all sin.
By faith alone in Christ we win.

What is the best ending of every story, of every Reformation story, "to be continued!"

Amen.