

Sunday, Oct. 29, 2017

Message: "500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation" - Pastor David preaching

Scripture: Ephesians 2:4-10

Text: Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Blurb: We often take our salvation for granted. We don't think much about it. Yet 500 years ago, many Christians believed that salvation had to be earned. This is also true today! This Sunday we'll hear the story of one man who, 500 years ago, read the Bible, realized that restoration with God was a free gift, and began a protest. We continue to offer reform to all people who do not know the free gift of life abundant and eternal!

Memory Verse: "The righteous will live by faith." -Habakuk 2:4

Activity/Children's Lesson: Have kids help operate a make-shift printing press, and print the memory verse. Talk about how the printing press helped spread the Gospel, and now we can do that now, too.

Gathering Song: *Celebrate* - Sanctify

Welcome: -David

- Good morning! I'm David, the pastor here, and
- Welcome to Forest Hills, where together we Love. Grow. and Serve. Jesus.
- First time guests invited to the welcome center
- Kids will stay in worship
 - The whole service will be worship for all ages
 - Kids bags, and kids table in the back.
- Insert: Church at home: use it this sometime this week.

PP: Memory Verse: "The righteous will live by faith." -Habakkuk 2:4

Today we are hosting a special Reformation Sunday, honoring the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation!

There are three major branches of the Christian Church.

There were no official branches for the first 1,000 years after Jesus, until 1054 when the Church split into the Eastern Church, called the Orthodox Church—like the Greek, and Russian Orthodox Churches, and the Western Church, called the Roman Catholic Church, encompassing the most of Europe.

The Roman Catholic church became politically powerful, and corruption spread throughout its leadership. Some leaders taught that you are saved by God by works, especially when you give money to the Church. Needless to say, this didn't sit well with others, especially those who read the Bible!

Well, on October 31, 1517—that's right, 500 years ago this Halloween—a German monk named Martin Luther posted 95 issues he wanted to discuss, about the ways that the Church was not teaching what the Bible said.

That date marks the official beginning of the Protestant Reformation—Christians who protested the incorrect teachings of the Church and sought to reform it.

This also created the third major branch of the Christian Church, the Protestant Churches.

We, here at Forest Hills United Methodist Church, are a part of this Protestant branch.

So, today, we are celebrating the Reformation's 500th anniversary, on Tuesday.

So, amid all the trick-or-treaters, also remember the beginning of the Reformation.

Our memory verse today is one of the key Scriptures that teach us that salvation is offered to us without financial cost, that it is paid by Jesus' death on the cross, freely offered to any who would receive it, and received by faith in Jesus.

The verse is simple, but powerful! We know it best from Romans 1:17, also Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38, but these are quoting the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk. It's a truth that pervades all of Scripture. It's just this: "The righteous will live by faith."

Let's try it together: "The righteous will live by faith." -Habakkuk 2:4

Worship Music Set: -Sanctify

Cornerstone

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Reformation Hymn

Worship prayer - Andrew

Prayers: -Pastor David

The Reformation was a Spirit-led movement. It was a movement of the Word of God, and common, ordinary people, who were praying.

So, this morning, in honor of the Reformation, I'm going to ask for you in the congregation to lift up praying voices.

We're going to begin by praying a Psalm together in unison, as was the custom of the Reformers to pray Psalms every day.

Then we'll have on the screen prayers to say, and we'll ask for 10 different volunteers just to jump in and pray them out loud. If more than one starts at the same time, keep on praying together. It's all good.

Then we'll close with everyone praying another Psalm together.

So, everyone prays the first Psalm.

Then volunteers jump in and pray different lines of the prayers. Then we all close in prayer together.

So, let us pray...

PP#1/1: Prayers, from Psalm 46, *in unison:*

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.

PP#1/2: Prayers

Volunteer 1: **We give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit whose light brought new understanding of both the Living Word and the written Scripture.**

Volunteer 2: **We ask for that Light to continue today with us.**

Volunteer 3: **We are grateful for the inspiration that lead to the printing press, spreading the Gospel in many languages. Continue that inspiration today!**

Volunteer 4: **We also thank you for our continued freedom in the Son to share that same news of salvation through your grace and Christ's faithfulness.**

PP#3: Prayers

Volunteer 5: **We remember the lives that were lost in the struggle to reform the church on earth-those who were martyred, those who died fighting, those who perished in hiding, and who were killed on all sides.**

Volunteer 6: **We remember also the lives that have been lost throughout history in the name of religion and for those who die today for daring to believe.**

Volunteer 7: **We thank you for the instruction that comes through our church heritage-the teachings, the understanding of the saints, the gift of community, and a deeper appreciation of God's gift of Holy Communion and Holy Baptism.**

PP#4: Prayers

Volunteer 8: **We thank you for the presence of Jesus Christ-in us, with us, and for us-and for the support of the Holy Spirit, ever reforming us.**

Volunteer 9: **God of stability and change, we thank you that true reformation is always your work and always being done in us out of your love for your whole creation. We are ever reformed by the work of your love.**

Volunteer 10: **Dear God, please continue to reform your world, your Church, and we your people. Keep us reformed, and ever being reformed!**

PP#5: Prayers, From Psalm 118, *in unison*:

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.

The Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song,

And He has become my salvation.

Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them,

And I will praise the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

Affirmation of Faith: "The Apostles' Creed"

Kid's Message: Reformation Review: The Guttenberg Press -Andrew

50th Anniversary Video: David & Hellen Ash

Offering: *To God Be the Glory* -Sanctify

PP#1: 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23

The 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

PP#2: *Image of common poor people in 1500.*

The world 500 years ago was dramatically different than it is now. There were a few wealthy and powerful people, but most were poor, uneducated, and in some way worked the soil. They ate the same food nearly every meal, slept on the dirt floors of their shack homes, and rarely bathed. There were few comforts, medicines, or possessions. Life expectancy was about 35 years, with over a third of children dying before reaching the age of 15.

But in some ways, life was very similar to what it is now. People struggled to thrive, sought the meaning of life and their purpose in it, but also believed in God. Like today, the world was also going through a momentous upheaval driven by communication. 500 years ago, the printing press, for the first time in history, made mass communication cheap and easy...information was accessible to everyone. Today, we are going through another momentous re-defining of reality through technological communication advancements—computers, internet, mobile devices—a change the likes of which our world has not seen for the past 500 years. Then, and now, are distinct times of massive shifts. This may explain why most of us are a bit bewildered in life, somewhat lost, confused, and struggling to understand it all.

PP#3: *Impressive image of Cologne Cathedral*

During that confusion 500 years ago, the Church was powerful and tried to dictate most of daily life. It kept people in the grip of fear warning that if you did not follow its teachings and rules, and obey its leaders, you would be lost to hell when you died. The Church, you see, was the keeper of God's salvation.

PP#4: *An indulgence from Luther's day.*

To help the common, uneducated, and simple people stay close to God, the Church offered policies to live by. The problem is that with such great power and amazing influence, church leaders began to manipulate church teachings in their favor. For example, the Church taught that salvation is evidenced by good works. So, if you are not doing good works, as the Church described them, then you are obviously not saved. So, some church leaders suggested that giving money to the church showed your earnestness of faith, or working at the church, or cleaning the priest's house, or giving the bishop gifts. Obviously these people were certainly saved! But simple, uneducated, and superstitious people need concrete reminders of their salvation. To help them, perhaps the church could give out written documents, called indulgences, stating their salvation. So, when someone gave money to the Church, the Church could provide an indulgence to remind them that they are certainly saved. And to make it easier for the people, perhaps the Church could send around collection boxes into all the villages to receive the donations from eager people wanting to show their love for Jesus by giving money to the Church, and those operating the collection boxes needed a supply of indulgences to hand out. And God would want His servants, the donation collectors, and priests and bishops, to have the finest things of life because, after all, people are giving gifts to God's work, and God deserves the best!

PP#5: *Image of Martin Luther in the thunderstorm.*

In this kind of setting, in 1483, a boy named Martin was born in Germany to Hans and Margaret Luther. Hans was a prosperous businessman. Martin managed to survive the perils of childhood, and at the age of 13, he was enrolled in a school run by monks. Hans had high hopes for his bright son, and wanted him to become a lawyer, so in 1501 Hans paid for Martin's education at Erfurt, the premier university of the area. In 1505, after receiving his Master's degree, the 22-year-old Martin was walking home to his proud father, when suddenly a violent thunderstorm broke out. Then, suddenly lightening struck just feet away from where Martin was! Martin was sure God was angry with him, and he prayed frantically that if God were to spare him, he would become a monk.

PP#6: *Image of Martin Luther as a monk.*

Eerily, the storm broke, and Martin was saved. But when he told his father that he was now going to become a monk, another storm broke out! But Martin was true to his word.

The monastery leaders recognized his intelligence, and insisted that Martin continue his studies. They made him professor of Old Testament, even though Martin had never read the Bible! So, Martin threw himself into Biblical Studies, and in 1512 he received his doctorate.

As he read the Bible, in Latin and in Hebrew and Greek, he had a growing concern that what the Church was teaching wasn't lining up very well with the Bible. He was teaching the Psalms, and over and over again he ran into conflicts with how the Church was interpreting that people could earn salvation through good works. He started reading St. Augustine, who had argued that the Bible had greater authority than the Church leaders on all things spiritual.

PP#7: Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 10:9 "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Augustine had been reading Romans when he had his heart conversion. Luther was reading Augustine's commentary on Romans, and had a conversion of his heart and mind. Wages earned are sin and bring death. But eternal life is a gift from God through Jesus....a gift....free gift!! All you need to do to be saved is declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead! This transformed everything for Martin! Scripture taught of free salvation! No works! No indulgences! Just faith. What good news!

Side note, it was when Wesley was hearing Martin Luther's commentary on Romans that Wesley had his heart conversion, and had his heart strangely warmed!

Meanwhile, an indulgence-seller came to town, seeking donations to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome...yes, the very one still at the Vatican today.

PP#8: *Image of Luther nailing the 95 These on the door of the church in Wittenburg.*

Luther went to hear him. The friar was teaching that donations of money could set deceased loved ones free from purgatory. He even had developed a sales jingle. It was, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, The soul from Purgatory springs." Luther was enraged. He went back to his study and drafted a list of disputes he saw between what the Church was teaching and what the Bible said.

He finally ran out of steam after listing 95 of them. And he decided to call a discussion among the other professors and priests around what he titled, "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences." So, on Halloween Day, October 31, 1517, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther took these 95 Theses and posted them on the church front door, which acted as the community bulletin board.

The first two of the theses summarized the whole of Luther's issue. The first was that God desired believers to seek repentance, and the second was that faith alone—and not deeds—would lead to salvation. He also suggested that the pope, who was filthy rich, should pay for his own church, rather than making poor people pay for it.

Now, Martin had written in Latin, intending the discussion only for the scholars of the town. But someone—and to this day we don't know who—translated them into German, and took them to the new printing press in town. Within three days, literate people were reading them to others all over the city. The Reformation had begun.

PP#8: *Image of Martin Luther defending at the Diet of Worms*

It wasn't long before copies landed in Rome. In 1518 Luther was summoned to Augsburg to an imperial diet—which means assembly or defense. Luther refused to recant. In stead, he continued to write and publish the biblical arguments against what the Church was teaching, not just about indulgences and works-righteousness, but also purgatory, and the supreme authority of the Bible over the pope or church councils, and that God can grant salvation to those who aren't a part of the Church, too.

The pope declared Luther's writings heretical, and demanded they be burned. But for the first time in history, because of the printing press, copies of writings could be produced faster than they could be destroyed.

In 1520 the pope declared Luther himself a heretic, and in 1521 summoned Luther for another Diet in Worms. Luther refused to recant, claiming that the Bible taught salvation by grace *alone* through faith *alone* in Christ *alone*. Famously pointing to his writings and the Bible, he proclaimed, "I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen."

PP#9: The 5 *solas* (alones) of the Protestant Reformation

- 1) *Sola fide*: Salvation comes through **faith alone**
- 2) *Sola gratia*: Favor from God comes through His **grace alone**
- 3) *Sola Christus*: Salvation is accomplished by **Christ alone**
- 4) *Sola Scriptura*: **Scripture alone** is the one true authority on all things spiritual
- 5) *Soli Deo gloria*: "Glory be to **God alone**"

The problem was the word "alone." The Church believed all these things, but not that they were totally the way of salvation. For example, God's grace earns salvation, but we must also work to show our reception of it. We receive it by faith, but that faith must be accompanied by works. Christ offers salvation, but He offers it through the Church. Scripture is authority, but it is the Church's interpretation of it that is also required. And glory is always to God, but His Church should also receive some glory, too. It was Luther's stubborn word, "alone."

PP#10: Ephesians 2:4-10 (NKJV)

- 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even

when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Luther pointed to the Bible over and over again. No! It is *alone!* It's true, even if the Church leaders think that people need more guidance and rules and structures.

One of his foundational passages was Ephesians 2. We pick it up in verse 4 . . .

“4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come [life in heaven after death] He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus [*sola Christus*]. 8 For by grace you have been saved [*sola gratia*] through faith [*sola fide*], and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast [*soli Deo gloria*]. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Works come separate from saving faith. Good works come *after* we are saved, never before!

PP#11: *Image of the Wartburg Castle*

Luther refused to recant, and so was declared a heretic, and sentenced to death. But his writings had also been read by his king, who did not agree with the pope. And although he never met Martin Luther, that night he secretly had Luther kidnaped and imprisoned for protection at his castle in Wartburg. No one knew what happened to him! During that year of exile, Luther turned his focus to perhaps his second greatest accomplishment. He began translating the Bible, for the first time, into German. The people needed to read and hear the Bible in their own language, he argued, so they could see for themselves if the preachers were correctly teaching the Bible.

By the way, because of the influence of his German Bible translation, which, was printed by the thousands, Luther is also credited in formulating the modern German language.

PP#12: *Image of Luther as an older man.*

By the time Luther came out of hiding, the Reformation had spread across the land. People were fighting wars over it. In 1525 Martin married a nun, and they had five children. Although Martin has sparked the Reformation, it grew much bigger than him, and he slowly faded from the limelight. The Church continued its defiance, and other reformers rose to continue the charge. One characteristic, then, of Protestant Christianity, is that Protestant churches are not organized all together. There are lots and lots of different Protestant denominations—thousands!—United Methodism being one of them.

What started out as a protest and a quest for reform, was rejected by the Church, and so a third branch of Christianity grew. Eventually the Roman Church did reform, but it took a while! Today, Catholics and Protestants view each other as Christians.

PP#13: *First image on Google Images when you type in “Reformation 2017 it's still all about Jesus”*

And the world is again in a time of change. We are racked by fears, death seems so powerful, and God is forgotten. People struggle to thrive, seek the meaning of life and our purpose in it. We have ability to communicate in new ways, and yet we are feeling more and more alone and estranged. Our culture is in upheaval, and we often despair of how to navigate it. And the common religious context is a belief in God, with a belief that we have to be good people, doing good works, in order to get to heaven. We don't know the Bible very well, and violence erupts.

Life now is more similar to Luther's day than I first thought. And once again, we need the breaking out of the true Gospel, that God desires—yearns for—people to seek Him, that salvation through Jesus is offered to everyone as a free gift, that all we need to do to be saved is profess Jesus in our hearts and by our mouths. God has a plan to change everything! It's still all about Jesus! Our world needs this hope, this good news.

We still need reformation! We do. We pray for reformation, in our lives. We need our own hearts reformed. We do not earn our salvation. It is a free gift! We need reformation in our homes and families. We live by grace and peace. We need to release God's transformation. We need reformation in our churches. We need to stick to the main thing: offer Christ, and Him crucified! We need reformation in our world, a world that is drifting with new technology, but lack of purpose.

We pray for reformation! On this Halloween, I ask you, church, to pray for reformation. Pray that we would be reformed, and for God to continue to reform us. Tell the story of Martin Luther to someone this week. Pray for each trick-or-treater, as they come to your door. Each day this week, share today's memory verse with someone. The message needs to get out into our hurting world! Pray for the Light of Jesus to shine.

Thank you God, for the early reformers. Make us your reformers today.

Soli Deo gloria! Amen!

Closing Song: *Reformation Hymn (Again)*

Memory verse: "The righteous will live by faith." -Habakuk 2:4

Announcements:

FHUMC's 50th Anniversary:

50/50 Appeal - Big, audacious, crazy goal!! Due by last day of Nov.

Pick up invitations for Dec. 10 celebration in mail boxes and for others.

Pastor Jack Shields preaching next Sunday

Wednesday: M&M - Potluck and sharing about saints in our lives.

Church Conference Nov. 12

Benediction

Dan Hair

Church@Home

Here are some ways for you to take worship home with you this week!

Memory Verse (review at least once a day):

“The righteous will live by faith.” -Habakkuk 2:4 (Also Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38)

Digging Deeper

Read: Ephesians 2:4-10

Reflect: In what ways do you try to earn God’s favor by what you do, and what you give? What would it look like for you to live more by faith?

Discuss: What are some of the fears that people really struggle with today? How is our world full of evil? What can Jesus-followers do to respond to this evil? What evil do you see in your life? What can you do about it?

Pray: Like Martin Luther often did, pray through Psalm 46 or 118.

Do: On Halloween Day, tell someone the story of Martin Luther posting the 95 Theses 500 years ago.

With Kids:

[From Andrew.]