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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
October 26, 2014  
REFORMATION Sunday

Scripture Lessons: 2 Chronicles 29:12-19; Hebrews 13:7-9  
Hymns: 224; 261; 292; 283 (774)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 8:30-36

30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide  
in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know  
the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have  
never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be  
made free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever  
commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the  
house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son  
makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Doctrine matters!

That is what the Reformation really came down to was an  
understanding that teachings matter. If they are based upon the  
truth of God's Word they are not only reliable truth, but truth that  
leads men to know their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Luther grew

up in a church that promoted the church's traditions, and legends, and the ideas and philosophy and the merits of man rather than the truth of God. The result for young Martin Luther was a tormented soul. Even after giving his life to the church and becoming a monk Luther could not find peace. He could not find peace because he did not know the Scriptures "**which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**" (2 Timothy 3:15). It was not until Luther read the Word of God that he found that the righteousness of God was that righteousness of Christ which God imputes to us by grace through faith. Luther campaigned hard for the truth of God's Word to be taught in the churches. Luther understood that doctrine matters, for without sound doctrine based upon the Word of God there is no peace of mind, for there is no peace with God.

We live in a time when many different things are emphasized in churches. In some we see an emphasis on social programs. In some we see an emphasis on being political activity, and a concerted effort is made by the organized church to influence government. In some political correctness and relevance are emphasized. In others it is all about group activities that attract community attention. In some there is an emphasis on the emotional ingredients of a true spiritual experience. Doctrine has little or no emphasis left at all within many churches. In fact many consider it bothersome that anyone should be concerned with doctrine beyond the fact that we worship Jesus as Lord. But even then one should not probe too deeply into what that means that Jesus is Lord, just say it, and leave it at that.

Jesus taught people. Most of His time in ministry was spent teaching the true doctrines concerning the Kingdom of God and warning in no uncertain terms against the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. The emphasis on His ministry was the Word of God. Jesus would lead us to a deeper appreciation of --

**THEME: The Blessings Delivered to Us in the Word.**

On this Reformation Sunday we are reminded that we must not take the Word for granted, or fail to appreciate what it is that the Word brings to us. Recall the experience of Martin Luther when he finally was granted the opportunity to actually study the Scriptures.

He found it to be a life changing experience, indeed a heart changing experience. We see this blessing made evident in Jesus' ministry. Our text reveals –

## **I. The Saving Power of Jesus' Word.**

**John 8:30** As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

Martin Luther discovered this for himself as he studied the Word in the library of the monastery. It opened his heart to understand that **“the just shall live by his faith”** (Habakkuk 2:4). This simple verse first revealed by God through the prophet Habakkuk opened Luther's eyes to the fact that **“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”** (Titus 3:5). It was the power of the Word of Christ that brought Martin Luther to faith, just like it was the Word of Christ in Jesus actual preaching that made it so that **“As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.”**

We need to be reminded of that frequently because we are tempted by the apparent success that is visible in so many of these “super churches” to believe that programs and popular music, and emotional outcries are necessary to convince others to believe, that they possess the power to change hearts. The power is in the Word and the Holy Spirit who works through the message preached. The message matters! What's the message? The message has got to be that one message that is **“the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes,”** It is the gospel of Christ. (Romans 1:16). Paul also added later in that same epistle to the Romans, **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17).

The message of God's Word needs to be presented in its truth and purity, not after it has been redacted by theological and historical scholars who claim to know better than others what is true and what is myth. Doctrine matters. The truth of the Word must be maintained among us, and by the grace of God is has been preserved. By the grace of God we have been brought to --

## **II. The Knowledge of the Truth.**

**John 8:31** Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth,

Jesus said you would know the truth by continuing in His Word.

The world speaks of relative truth and scientific truth. They deny that there is a moral, spiritual truth that is absolute. This skepticism is nothing new. It dates back to the Garden of Eden when the serpent planted that seed of doubt in Eve’s mind and heart, “Did God really say?” We see that skepticism of the world reflected also in Pontius Pilate who answered Jesus, “**What is truth?**” when Jesus had asserted that He had come into this world to bear witness to the truth. Jesus had made it clear again at that time, “**Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice**” (John 18:37-38).

The world still wants you to believe that there are different kinds of truth, and religious truth or philosophical truth may vary from person to person, and culture to culture, and really has nothing to do with scientific truth or historical truth, or for that matter political truth, if there can be such a thing. Don’t be deceived. The truth of God is the truth revealed in Christ Jesus, but that truth is not segregated from all other truth. It is rather the source and key to all truth, for God is the source of all things, and maintains all things. The Son of God, our Savior Jesus Christ is the Creating Word, and Lord of all. **His Word is truth, over all.** Nothing in this world can undermine or change, or reveal Jesus to be wrong or false. It doesn’t matter how often or how loudly the representatives of this world declare otherwise. The Word of the Lord is completely reliable not only in speaking of the past, and of the present, but also of those things which are to come. Continue in His Word and YOU shall know the truth!

Knowing the truth brings us to God. Knowing the truth separates us from the evil of this world. That is what Jesus declared in His High Priestly prayer offered to the Father on the night before He died. He prayed:

**John 17:17-19** Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the

world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

This focuses us our attention on the precise truth that lies at the heart of all Holy Scripture. It is the truth of Jesus Christ who came into the world to redeem us from sin. All of Scripture truth brings us back to the cross, for it is the epicenter of God's astounding and powerful grace that delivers us from sin and death.

This is the truth that Martin Luther discovered as the Spirit led him in his study of the Scriptures, the truth that lifted the veil from Luther's eyes so that he finally comprehended the love of God and the righteousness of God. This is not that pure holiness which cannot tolerate sin, but that righteousness which God in His grace established in the life and death of His Son Jesus Christ, that righteousness which He credited to the world in Jesus' resurrection. He credits this righteousness to each of us through faith. This is the truth that is found only in the Word of God. It is the truth that grants us --

### **III. Freedom from Sin's Slavery.**

**John 8: 31-36** Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Oh sweet freedom! In America we cherish our freedom, and by that we mean mostly our liberties in a sociopolitical way. We declare that we are free! In fact we are slaves. You can just hear the outcry if we went around the country telling people without any context that they were slaves. Even given a spiritual context many would strongly protest. They would assert that man has a free will, a will that can live for good and do good! They would assert that

they serve no one but themselves! In saying that they make it clear they don't serve God!

Our text reveals man's reluctance to recognize that we are by nature slaves of sin. The Jews were offended by Jesus' comments. Even though they were serfs of the Roman Empire the Jews asserted that they were slaves to no one. Jesus made it clear that whoever we serve in life is our master, and we are their slave. If we serve sin then indeed we are slaves to sin! Corrupt human nature would rather see the pursuit of the carnal pleasures and fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh as the ultimate freedom. That is the devil's lie! Paul wrote of this to the Romans.

**Romans 6:16-18** Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Allowing sin to have its sway in your life makes sin and the devil your master. You are not free, but serving a cruel tyrant who will only bring shame in this life and death and eternal condemnation hereafter. If we rather obey that righteousness which is of faith, that is clinging to the righteousness of Christ, and live for Him, and follow Him as true disciples, then we shall be set free from sin's tyranny that we might serve the Lord, and be slaves of Christ. That brings glory and honor in this life and fullness of joy in that life which is to come. This is the peace that Luther discovered for himself and brought to light for us yet today. How did this come to us? Not by our efforts, but by grace as the Lord reveals to us in --

**Hebrews 2:14-15** Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Jesus came down to earth and took upon Himself our flesh and blood. He became fully human so that He could die. He died so

that He could destroy the power of the devil, who had with his lies and deceit maintained power over us. The devil had instilled in us the fear of death and with it made us subject to bondage. Jesus conquered death. The grave could not hold Him! He made resurrection a reality, not only for Himself, but for all men, so that the children of God might be raised to everlasting life.

That's the truth, the truth that is revealed for us only in His Word. That's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The only place you can actually really find that truth is not in a courtroom where such words are uttered by men, but in the Word of the Lord. Continue in His Word and you shall know that truth, and you will be a true disciple of our Lord Jesus. Continue in that truth and you shall be free from sin's curse, free from the fear of death, free to serve the Lord and to glorify His name here in time and hereafter in eternity.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.