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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  
November 1, 2015  
Reformation Sunday

Scripture Lessons: 2 Chronicles 29:1-12a, 15-20; John 2:13-17  
Hymns: 758; 266; 774; 261 (238:3-5)

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

Sermon Text: Hebrews 13:7-9

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of  
God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their*  
conduct. <sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.  
<sup>9</sup>Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For *it*  
*is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which  
have not profited those who have been occupied with them.  
(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: Reformation

Reformation is one of the festivals of the Lutheran Church that has  
started to be neglected. Certainly most children have other things  
on their minds on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Well, it has been almost 500 years  
since a man named Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door  
of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. He wasn't trying to start any  
kind of upheaval or movement. He was simply trying to get a  
discussion started about the sale of these papers called indulgences  
that promised people the forgiveness of sins for a price, a donation

really to the building of the new Sistine chapel in Rome. He was alarmed by the abuses that were associated with the indulgences and how some believed they could purchase release from the sufferings of purgatory for a small price, some were led to believe they could acquire indulgence for a sin that they would like to commit. It was all seen by Luther as a grave and serious danger to men's souls. He thought that by writing these statements in Latin some of the local scholars would be led to discuss that matter and perhaps some of these worst abuses would be set aside.

What came out of it was far more than Dr. Martin Luther had ever imagined. There was a great upheaval. There was a God sent movement that brought a restoration of the teaching of God's truth to the people. These events were framed around some basic principles which we have come to think of as the three Scriptural "Solas" or "alones" of the Reformation: "Grace alone," "Scripture alone" and "Faith alone." Our sermon text this morning will lead us to appreciate how these –

## **THEME: Reformation Principles Preserve the Gospel Among Us.**

We begin with --

### **I. Remembering those who Taught us the Truth of God's Word.**

**Hebrews 13:7** "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct."

These words are important for us. They would remind us to pay attention to those who have gone before and taught us the truth of God's Word. In response to these words we may recall the instruction of our parents, or of a particular pastor or teacher who was especially influential in our lives. If we think about how they taught us it may have begun with lessons from a Bible story book, as we were introduced to the heroes of faith in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Almost certainly we will recall that along the way we were introduced to Luther's Small Catechism. We will remember how we studied that little book, and even memorized most of it because it faithfully presented to us the basic

truths of God: who He is, how He made us, how He redeemed us and how He sanctified us and keeps us unto eternal life. So it is that some of our most deeply formed memories of those who taught us the truth of our salvation are also memories of Martin Luther leading us into the truth of God's Word so that we might comprehend the Scriptures, and realize through faith how Jesus saved us from sin and death.

Luther brought us the truth also in song. He leads us to praise the Lord and trust Him in two of the hymns we are singing this morning. Before very long we will join in singing a favorite Christmas Eve hymn also written by Martin Luther, "*From Heaven Above to Earth I Come*." This wondrous hymn refreshes our recollection of the angel's message of God's love and grace revealed in Jesus' birth.

**Hebrews 13:7** "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct."

Martin Luther wasn't alone. The Lord gave Luther support and protection with other children of God who heard the truth as Luther taught that Word of Truth. Some of these were the princes of Germany. These princes backed Luther with their power and influence. When they concluded that it would not be safe for Luther to appear before Emperor Charles in Augsburg, they presented to Emperor Charles a confession of faith called the Augsburg Confession, signing their names to it in defiance of pope and emperor. They put their lives on the line not only protecting Luther, but in confession of the truth of the gospel. The gospel has been preserved for us today in the Lutheran confessions which have been delivered to us in the Book of Concord that we might know the truth of Christ Jesus, the truth of our salvation.

These men were heroes of faith. Their names included Philip Melancton, Luther's young protégé, who wrote the Augsburg Confession and the signers of the confession which Melancton had written: **John Duke of Saxony, Elector. (elector of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire); George, Margrave of Brandenburg; Ernest, Duke of Luneburg, Philip, Langrave of**

## **Hesse; John Frederick, Duke of Saxony; Francis, Duke of Luneburg. Wolfgang, Prince of Anhalt.**

These heroes of faith risked all, position, property and their very lives in defense of the truth. When John Duke of Saxony left for Augsburg he warned his wife that he might not return alive. They boldly stood before Charles in defense of the gospel of Christ. Because of these men who were strengthened and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are blessed.

Consider the outcome. The Lord blessed and protected them. They died in faith. They received from the Lord the crown of righteousness which was far more precious than any wealth or power or honor and glory they possessed in this life. Remember how precious this truth was to them when we consider how important hearing the Word is to us, how precious this truth of salvation is to us, how essential this precious gift given to us through these men of the Reformation remains for our salvation. May the Spirit strengthen us to stand firm in this truth, for it is a fundamental truth for us also. This is because --

## **II. Jesus Is Unchanging.**

Our text declares:

**Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We know these words well, and yet we live in a time when many are attempting to change our perception of Christ and reshape His message. That is nothing new. It has been going on since the days of the apostles. It was the reason these words were originally written to the Hebrew Christians. All that we confess of Jesus in the ancient, universal creeds, the Apostle's, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds remains true today and forever. Jesus is true God of God, Light of Light; by Him all things were made; Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, He was crucified, died, and was buried, He rose again on the third day, Jesus has ascended on high and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from where He shall come again on the last day to judge the living and the dead. All this remains true now and forever!

This is the simple truth of our salvation. This is the amazing truth of God's grace toward a sinful mankind. This is the truth of Christ Jesus that has been established by God since before the world began. It was the foundation of the promise that saved Adam and Eve, and gave them life instead of the death of sin. It is the foundation of the faith of Abraham that led him to look for another homeland other than Canaan, for he looked for that homeland that would abide forever. This is the truth that enriched the writings of the prophets, as Isaiah wrote of Jesus' passion, teaching us that Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, so that by His stripes we might be healed (Isaiah 53). This is the truth the Apostles comprehended by faith for themselves, and written of in the gospels and epistles, and preached to the people of all nations so that we, the people of the gentile nations might know of God's love for a fallen world. This love caused Him to give His only begotten Son that whoever, WHOEVER believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). This is the truth, the only truth of Jesus which is the only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). This is the truth of the Reformation that Luther uncovered as he studied the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit opened up the Scriptures to Luther, and he served as God's agent that this precious truth might come down to us today.

So we are saved by grace, through faith, for Jesus' sake. This truth shall endure for all time and even the very gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). But that is not for the lack of trying. So it is in the tradition of the Reformation that the Lord blesses us by --

### **III. Maintaining Purity of Doctrine among us.**

The final verse of our text warns and exhorts us concerning doctrine.

**Hebrews 13:9** Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

The Hebrew Christians to which these words were first addressed had been deceived by a group called the Judaizers into believing that even though Jesus died for our redemption and was raised for our justification, one could add merit, make one's standing before God more secure and higher by continuing to observe the Old Testament ceremonial laws regarding foods and festival days and sacrifices. This diminished the gospel among them. It mixed grace and work righteousness. Grace and works cannot be mixed for what is of works is no longer of grace. If it is earned it is not the free gift of God. The gospel was being stolen from them. They needed to be strongly encouraged to reject the ideas of work-righteousness, and to abide in the gospel of salvation by grace alone, without the deeds of the law.

We need to maintain the truth today that “**the heart is established by grace**” (v.9). God has given us new hearts by the working of the Spirit through the Word. It is the right teachings of Holy Scripture that reveal to us the mercy and grace of God. When people tinker and tamper and seek to improve or “demythologize” the Scriptures they are violating the Scriptures which the Lord gave us by inspiration. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is true and inviolate (2 Timothy 3:16)! We need that confidence, for our eternal lives depend upon these words of Holy Writ being true. We dare not allow even the smallest false doctrine to be tolerated, for every teaching of Holy Scripture eventually leads back to the Christ. Every false teaching is the devil's attempt to undermine the Christian's confidence first in the Word of God, and then in his very salvation.

The teachings of the church are not to be determined by the changing standards of morality within society. They are not to be measured by the principles of science and the latest theories concerning the origins of the universe. They are not to be established by the feelings of exhilaration that one might experience in a certain spiritual setting be it evangelical Christian or Eastern mysticism. They are founded and drawn from the Word of God alone. As the principle of the Reformation *Scripture alone* declares.

With this standard we possess the truth that comes to us from God. The authority of what we teach is God's alone. We are able to

teach and believe and live with the confidence that the Lord is giving us the direction we need in Holy Scripture to lead us to our heavenly home. Don't be carried along with the rationalizations or the fine sounding words of this world. We have the truth that saves.

This truth had been hidden for too long during the Middle Ages, the dark ages of history. We thank and praise the God of our salvation that in His grace He preserved that truth, and revealed that truth again through His servant Martin Luther and the many other heroes of faith of the Reformation. May God bless us with His grace that we might be like defenders of the faith for our children and any generations yet to be born in these last days.

**AMEN.**

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