

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**October 29, 2023**  
**Reformation Day (observed)**  
**ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

P In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C **who made heaven and earth.**

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus**

**Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

**Introit**

*Introit*

I will speak of your testimonies before kings, | [O Lord,] and shall not be | put to shame.

I will bless the LORD at | all times;\*

his praise shall continually be | in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast | in the LORD;\*

let the humble hear | and be glad.

Come, O children, lis- | ten to me;\*

I will teach you the fear | of the LORD.

The LORD redeems the life of his | servants;\*

none of those who take refuge in him will | be condemned.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\***

**and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***

**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

I will speak of your testimonies before kings, | [O Lord,] and shall not be | put to shame.

## **Collect of the Day**

*Reformation Day*

**P** Let us pray.

Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

## **First Reading**

*Revelation 14:6–7*

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

## **Epistle**

*Romans 3:19–28*

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

### **Holy Gospel**

*John 8:31–36*

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

### **Apostles’ Creed**

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**The third day He rose again from the dead.**

**He ascended into heaven**

**and sits at the right hand of God the Father  
Almighty.**

**From thence He will come to judge the living  
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## Sermon Text – Romans 3:19-28

### Theme – What Does It Mean to be Lutheran

In the movie “Catch Me If You Can,” that came out in 2002, the character played by Leonardo DiCaprio impersonates an airline pilot and a medical doctor and a lawyer. I say “impersonates” because he is none of those things. It is, while working as a medical doctor, that he falls in love with a woman working at the hospital. That is when he decides to impersonate a lawyer. You see the woman’s father is a lawyer. By the way, there is one more thing he pretends to be and that is a Lutheran. Again, it is all because the woman he loves is Lutheran.

When the FBI catches up with him it is at their engagement party. That is when he confesses to his fiancée, “I am not a doctor; I never went to medical school; I am not a Harvard graduate; I am not a Lutheran.” After his fiancée considers all that he had just told her, she responds, “You are not a Lutheran?” It is as if that was the most important thing to her.

On this Reformation Day, we are going to consider the question: **“What Does It Mean to be Lutheran?”** We are going to do so on the basis of our text, Romans chapter 3, verses 19-28. In this portion of Scripture, the phrase **“the righteousness of God”** is an important one.

It is an important phrase, especially for us Lutherans. That is because there was a time when

Martin Luther heard the phrase, “**the righteousness of God,**” all he could think about was how he, himself, was not at all righteous. Oh, Luther tried to keep God’s commandments, but time and time again he broke those commandments. Luther knew that he deserved eternal punishment. It was enough to cause Luther to despair.

Maybe we have been there in our life, too. As we compare our lives to God’s expectations, as laid out in the 10 Commandments, we must recognize our failure to live according to those commandments.

We don’t have to get past the first commandment to recognize our sin. There are all kinds of false gods that we worship. Maybe our false god is family; maybe it is friends; maybe it is sports; maybe it is self. If we are going to depend on our righteous deeds to save us, we are in trouble. That’s because it is true what St. Paul says in our text, “**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:23).

We need to be reminded of that. That’s because sometimes we try to fool ourselves and others into thinking that we are not so bad. It’s like that character in the movie “Catch Me If You Can” who thought that if he put on an airline pilot’s uniform, he was a pilot. If he put on a doctor’s garb, he was a doctor. Well, we sometimes think that if we put on an air of righteousness, then we are righteous.

We are not at all righteous. Our text for today makes it clear. God's Law stops every mouth (Romans 3:19). That's because **"by works of the law no human being will be justified in [God's] sight"** (Romans 3:20).

As Luther read the words of our text, he came to realize that **"the righteousness of God"** was not talking about his own righteousness. It was pointing to the righteousness of Christ. It is His righteousness that belongs to us **"through faith in Jesus Christ"** (Romans 3:22). While it is true that **"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:22), it is also true that we can be **"justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"** (Romans 3:24).

You see, Jesus lived the righteous life that none of us can live. He always did the will of His heavenly Father. That will included dying on the cross for us. He sacrificed Himself for us. That's what that big word **"propitiation"** in our text is pointing to.

That's the righteousness of God. It is true what it says in our text, **"In His divine forbearance [God] passed over [our] sins"** (Romans 3:25). We have forgiveness through Jesus.

As Lutherans we know that we are saved by grace through faith. As Lutherans we realize that the law points out that we are sinners who deserve God's punishment. As Lutherans we know that God works



through Word and Sacrament to give us faith and strengthen that faith.

Getting our children baptized is important to us. Letting God's Word work in our lives is important to us. Receiving forgiveness through the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is important to us. That's what it means to be a Lutheran.

As Lutherans we know that when Judgment Day comes, Jesus isn't going to ask us, "Are you Lutheran?" No, He is going to ask us "Do you believe that my work alone is what saves you?" That's why we Lutheran proclaim both Law and Gospel.

It is my prayer that the Lord will keep us steadfast in this faith so that we keep on believing in the work of Christ. Because that's how we become righteous. AMEN

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church**

Mighty Fortress, Rock of refuge, sustain Your Church. Deliver her from error and preserve in her the proclamation of Your Gospel, that it would resound to every nation, tribe, people and language and that all may fear and give You glory.

Mighty Fortress, Rock of refuge, bless all ministers of Your Word. Help them rightly to preach Your Law so that all are held accountable to You without excuse and joyfully proclaim Your Gospel, that all would know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Mighty Fortress, Rock of refuge, look with compassion on all who are blind to the bondage of their sin. Open their eyes by the words of Jesus, and grant them the true freedom of sonship and a permanent place in Your household.

Mighty Fortress, Rock of refuge, make us truly Your disciples. Keep us in Your Word, free us from all errors, and make our homes and families peaceful. Preserve all fathers and encourage them for their godly task, that children would be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord.

Mighty Fortress, Rock of refuge, bless all civil authorities, especially our president; Congress; and all who make, administer and judge our laws. Protect them from the temptations that beset their offices, and grant them wisdom and courage to serve with integrity.

Mighty Fortress, Rock of refuge, be near to all who cry to You for healing of body and soul [*especially \_\_\_\_\_*]. Grant them release from their afflictions according to Your will. Sustain their hope in the full and final healing that awaits them at the day of Christ's appearing.

Mighty Fortress, Rock of refuge, we give You thanks for all Your servants who have departed this life in faith. We especially bless You today for the great reformers of Your Church who call us back to the Gospel and to the righteousness we have in Christ alone. Keep us in fellowship with them, and bring us at last to our heavenly home to see our Redeemer face to face; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**C Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## **Benediction**

*LSB 202*

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

**C Amen.**

## **Acknowledgments**

Divine Service, Setting Three from Lutheran Service Book

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