

Grace and peace to you dear friends, from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Today we recognize and celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation; the movement that formed our doctrine and identity as Lutherans who believe, celebrate, and share that nothing will ever come between ‘us’ and the ‘love of God’ through Jesus Christ our Lord.

After a frightening experience and an encounter with his own mortality, Martin Luther dedicated the rest of his life sharing his faith and understanding of God’s Holy Word. Luther performed every possible act, completed every argument, and finished every sentence, to convince the religious powers and authorities of the day that nothing remained for us to win salvation. Luther stood firm on his belief and understanding that everything we need is in Holy Scripture and that God has fully communicated His will and His actions with regard to the relationship He has and desires for His people: His Holy Church.

Word alone is an essential understanding. Of the four gospel narratives, three are of a similar view, and called the ‘synoptic’ gospels. However, the Gospel of John is uniquely different, which is made plain in its first words, which read; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...” Word alone my friends; and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus Christ, the living Word of God comes to us to grant life where sin and decay had separated us from our Creator and loving Father.

Martin Luther knew the Word of God. He knew the acts of God as well as the promises and hope contained in God’s Word. But the world, the place, and the time of Martin Luther are nothing like our world today. The Holy Bible was not available to people like today. The Holy Scripture was mainly published in Latin making it impossible for anyone but the ‘elect and educated’ access to read and study God’s Word.

Through faith and understanding of the power of God’s Word, Martin Luther became the first person to translate the bible into a language the common people could read and understand. For this first time in history, people could begin to read God’s Word for themselves from Genesis to Revelation or any passage in-between at any time and at their desire. Martin Luther’s understanding of Word alone takes on a new meaning and forever changes the landscape by bringing the Word of God to the people (the common people) of God.

Once we have the Word of God, what do we do with it? Martin Luther continues his task and shares his understanding that it is ‘faith alone’ that we need. Faith is a gift from God that allows us to believe that which otherwise we cannot reconcile to be true by any other means. Faith is how we accept the promises of God, the miracles of Jesus, and the divine relationship we, as humans, have with our Creator.

Faith alone is the life-changing element that is given to allow us to see the acts of God for the benefit of our eternal life. Once faith is granted to us, regardless of the measure, we are called to use our faith with confidence and assurance that God is actively participating in our life to advance His Kingdom. God calls us to serve for the sake of those who have not come to know what God has done for them. God calls upon us to share the story, the acts, the experiences, and the feelings of love, compassion, and care that we have encountered in life. God calls us to carry our brothers and sisters who lack the faith, for now, and grants us the resources and strength to lift them up.

Word alone and Faith alone transforms us to the beings that have the knowledge and understanding of who we are before our Almighty God and Father. For Luther, grace is also at the very heart of God in that grace alone is the means by which God acts. Grace is the undeserved favor that God shows for us; the sinners. God shows favor on His chosen people in the Old Testament narratives; and God extends grace to all, which He has redeemed through His only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, the Living Word of God.

Martin Luther shared all this five hundred years ago, and fifteen hundred years before Luther, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside as Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho. When the man heard that Jesus was approaching, he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” Jesus commands the man to come forward, to which He asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Unlike James and John who asked Jesus for positions of authority, the blind man acknowledged the Lord and responds, “My teacher (Greek = rabbouni: Master, Lord, teacher, rabbi), grant me to see again.”

What a beautiful story of Word, Faith, and Grace alone my friends! The man in the gospel narrative is without sight and still he has come to know who Jesus is. The man who could not see the miracles Jesus performs in the presence of the crowds believes. The man who could not observe with his own eyes Jesus healing, restoring, and renewing the life of those who travel and search for Him reveals his gift of faith.

The man without sight can see what many people around him are blind to. The man who is blind can see that Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, who comes to restore the Kingdom for the sake of all people of God.

With faith comes sight my friends. The Word of God with faith and understanding provide us with the full knowledge of every possible grace that we are well cared for and generously provided for in this Kingdom here and now. Like the blind man, we too are healed and sustained so that we might share our gifts with others for the sake of advancing the kingdom; **FOR THE SAKE OF BRINGING THE WORD OF GOD TO THE COMMON PEOPLE.**

We are following the steps of Luther who showed us that we are all workers together in this place and time. We are called to serve as we are able; as we have been gifted and blessed with faith in our God, an understanding of His word and the reality of His grace. Word, Faith, and Grace alone are the means of our justification before God.

Nothing comes between ‘us’ and ‘the love of God’ through Jesus Christ. We are born into this world and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. May the grace of God continue to sustain us all as we continue to bring the Word of God to all people in our words and actions, through our faith that reveals to all people the grace we live under; and the peace that passes all understanding to keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.