

**Sermon Notes October 29, 2023**  
**Peace Lutheran Church**  
**The Holy Gospel of John 8:31-36**  
**“Reforming Into the Future”**

When preparing for Reformation Sunday, I usually resist the temptation to do a “historical highlights” message. I could talk about indulgences, the Ninety-Five Theses, and “Here I Stand,” and I would get a few people saying, “Good sermon, pastor.” It is important to remember our history, but if we only focus on the historical events, we risk missing the good news of the Reformation.

The good news is that in the Reformation, the Holy Spirit acted for the sake of God's people. Reformation Sunday is another opportunity to tell the people about the Father's action to accomplish our salvation. The Spirit broke out in 1517 to remind this fractured creation that our salvation and life with God are not things we accomplish. The blessings of God are not things we earn, attain, or deserve. Yet Jesus Christ in his infinite love, grace and mercy, claims and makes us His own. The Holy Spirit calls us to Jesus and pours grace out on us.

Let's invite all our people to consider their own baptism. The Holy Spirit works through our family and our church family to pick us up and - in the case of infants - literally carry us to the font. We can do nothing on our own, yet the Holy Spirit makes our life with Christ happen. The congregation is invited to consider Holy Communion. The meal is a gift of blessing from Jesus. In his mercy Jesus shows up with us - on every altar and in every time and place - to give Himself for the sake of our salvation. It is not something we do. We simply receive what Jesus gives us.

We see this in scriptures. In Jeremiah 21, God gives a new covenant and inscribes it on the hearts of the people. God is at work, not us. In Psalm 46, we are told, “Be still,” stop what you are doing and “know that I am God” (v. 10). There is no human agency in this psalm. God is at work. Paul reminds us in Romans 3 that we are justified by faith. This could be an opportunity to look at Luther's commentary on the Third Article of the Creed in the Small catechism. The faith that justifies us is itself a gift from

the Father. In John 8, Jesus says that the answer is following His way, not our way. The thread uniting these readings is that it is God, the Holy Spirit, and our Lord Jesus doing the work. God's love and mercy are not depending upon what we do or fail to do.

We should always share how the Holy Spirit is at work now ...in this very moment. The Spirit is alive and at work in our church and THE CHURCH, in this world, and in each of us. You are invited to consider where we see God at work in our midst. Let us always point out the places where we have seen God at work through us. Be challenged to consider what God can do in each of us. You are reminded that the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are with us as we go forward. You are invited to imagine what Jesus can do with us!









