Ht 2017 october 29 reformation

John 8:31-36

So we’ve finally arrived! It’s Reformation Sunday and the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther pounding those ideas for reformation on the castle door.

We’ve been celebrating now for a year in various ways and will continue to do so, I’m sure but today I want to talk about the next 500 years!

What will the church look like in the future? I have no idea but I’m pretty sure it will not be like the church I attended as a child or even the church that was vibrant and filled to the brim with people and children 30 years ago.

I do believe though, that God’s church will always be. And as ELCA Lutherans I think a big part of our growth and development will be in reforming ourselves into people who stand for social justice and serving the underserved in our society.

After all, that’s what Jesus preached, wasn’t it? Include everyone, forgive everyone, care for those who need care.

This passage from John today is part of a much larger scene of increasing tension and opposition that runs from the beginning of chapter 7 to the end of chapter 8

The backdrop for all of this is the festival of booths which is the jewish harvest celebrations and a commemoration of god;s protection of the jews on their wilderness journey

During these chapters we hear Jesus offer anyone who is thirsty rivers of flowing water, that he is the light of the world, and that those who continue to abide in his word will be truly free.

This is a bold claim! And it prompts a division between those who believe and those who don’t

In today’s reading jesus says if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

All too often, reformation day celebrations have been constructed to celebrate the grandness of our theological heritage or worse, our superiority over other traditions.

So we might have said like the jews…we are followers of martin luther so have never been slaves to anyone

But no…and that’s certainly not what Jesus had in mind

The sole aim and intent of the reformers was to invite Christians into a new vision of the possibility of genuine relationship with God…not something regulated by hierarch but rather the promise of forgiveness based on what Christ has done on our behalf

We take this grace, this understanding for granted because of the boldness of Martin Luther

We are free indeed we are free to go directly to God with our prayers and petitions

We are free to know and share the amazing news that God loves us just as we are

We are free to realize that Christ has done the hard work, our sins are forgiven and we have been promised eternal life

Next week we will share memories of those loved ones who are now saints of light who have been freed from their labors and now dwell in God’s care

So as we celebrate this great freedom in Christ we must we simply must look toward the future

I think that we cannot simply remember the good old glory days of the Lutheran church but to pray and discern and wonder and be curious about who God calls us to be in the here and now

What does God expect of us in the future

We must constantly reform ourselves and our vision and our churches…

So I’m choosing four RE words to help us remember the reformation and give us direction for the future

These words, these concepts, work great for people as individuals and for communities of faith like ours.

There are literally dozens of re words all offering hope and guidance but here are the four I chose

First I think we need to repent

Then We need to renew

We need to rejoice

And finally we need to respond

Repent, renew, rejoice, respond

Let’s begin with repentance

This is a generous and giving congregation of hard workers I might make the argument that as a congregation there is no need for repentance…but let’s face it…. Many of us want what we want when we want it….some of us find fault with others…. Sometimes we are quick to judge

Remember that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God….

Sometimes our repentance might be to say we have no idea! That’s why one of our confessions say for things we have done and things we have left undone

After we’ve repented we can enjoy renewal of spirit

Renewal is a great word and it literally means to make new. In last week’s passage from Corinthians Jesus promises to make all things new and that’s not the only place we find that promise

If we can take a moment to sit quietly and breathe in the presence of God…our hearts our minds - our very spirits can be renewed

After sensing that wonderful peace that comes from knowing our sins are forgiven and that God is present we can truly rejoice

That word rejoice makes me think of joy which is way deeper and wider than mere happiness we can actually experience joy in the midst of challenge or trials!

So we rejoice!

Finally we are called to respond we can respond in so many waysin our personal lives… by forgiving another,or by speaking words of love, or providing help for others

As a congregation we respond by giving our time, our talent and our treasures

Repent renew rejoice respond words to remember

During this celebraton of the reformation.

With some ideas from

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