Reformation Day (observed)
John 8:31-36
October 25, 2026

The Reformation battle never ends. It's been going on from the beginning, long before the Book of Concord, long before Luther said, "Here I stand," long before the 95 theses, long before Augustine, long before the Apostles. The Reformation battle has been going on since the beginning.

Truly, Reformation started in the garden. Only it did not start with Reformation but with Formation when God formed from the dust of the earth the first humans who were to subdue the earth, rule over it, tend to and take care of it.

Only those first humans were reformed because they were convinced by a liar that God was the liar and they could be greater than God by disobeying Him.

And since that time, every work of the Lord has been to reform us back into His image, to strip away or cover up the false image put there by the devil.

See, the Lord created us to be people of faith, to trust and confess that everything He does and everything He provides is enough and more than enough, to believe that He will care for us and watch over us and guide us and love us.

Reformation is about faith. Reformation is about repentance. And from Adam to Noah to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, to Moses and the kings and the prophets the Lord has used these great patriarchs and proclaimers of His Word to show that it is by faith and faith alone that we are made just and not by our works.

Adam and Eve existed without shame or guilt; they were free to be the people God created them to be in every way. But the moment faith took a back seat and the work of self-provision – eating from that tree the forbidden fruit – the blinders went on and the mind and the heart questioned God's provision.

Luther, before faith, sought at every moment to find connection with God through the eating of that fruit. He saw his works as the means by which he could reach God. But the harder he tried, the further away he found God to be. Every good work became a chasm between him and God because the work was never good enough, it lacked perfection. And so he'd try again, and again, and again and he would fail again, and again, and again.

Eventually, such pursuit of God by works leads to despair and ultimately to abandonment of the quest. If you can't get to God by your efforts and if God doesn't seem to acknowledge your good works, why bother trying? Just live life eating and drinking and

making merry. Break the commandments because they're impossible to keep as God wants anyway is what we end up falling into when we try to reach God by our works.

The pursuit of God by the law will always lead to despair. And what's amazing is that the Lord never once says to His human creation that we must get to Him by keeping the law. Not once. But how many times has the Lord said – from Adam until this very moment – that we must believe and approach His holy throne by faith? Hundreds, maybe thousands of times in the Scripture we are called to live by faith.

By nature, we are born trying to get to God by our works and we never can, and we're never commanded to, that's the funny thing. See, at the heart of our human nature is to be like God and to earn by our works God's favor. Pride is the heart of our human nature.

Pride keeps us from confessing our weaknesses, our sins; pride keeps us fighting and struggling to be what we can never be by our works. Pride, the very sin which led to the fall.

But Jesus calls us to Reformation. Look at how He loves us and saves us. In baptism, it's not me keeping a commandment to be baptized, no, but it is God's saving Word coming to me by water which cleanses the eyes and the ears to see and to hear and to believe. "If you abide in my Word," which you do because you are baptized. You are a disciple of Christ, not because of what you have done, but because of what God has done for you by reforming you by water and word into the image of His Son. Your eyes and ears have been opened so that you know the truth, that Jesus has given His life for you and by doing so He has set you free, and you are free indeed!

And you have been made part of a family of freemen going back to the time of men like Noah and Abraham, men who believed in God's promises and by believing were called righteous and set free.

But the devil would have you doubting and questioning the motives of God and His Word, wondering if it's true, second-guessing His promises because you still sin. The devil will use the false teaching from such things as the Word of Faith movement to tell you that because you're not successful or rich or happy that you really don't believe as you should, that because you're not speaking in some secret angel language, that your faith isn't real, that because this church doesn't have 3,000 members and a 2 million dollar budget that we're somehow not "spiritual" or that God isn't with us.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Luther thought that because he wasn't getting better at keeping the law, that God wasn't with him. He hated God; he confesses this. He hated God and saw God as the great trickster who threw down this great and perfect law and demanded that Luther keep it only for him to discover that it was wholly unkeepable.

But God is not the trickster; the devil's the trickster, the liar, the monster. He's the one who says that your baptism isn't efficacious because you didn't have a choice or didn't have faith or didn't really mean it.

Jesus the truth teller. The Son HAS set you free. You ARE baptized. Just like the ancient people of Israel who walked through the Red Sea. They were set free by God Himself as that sea flooded away the enemy. Noah and his family were set free when, by the flood, evil was drowned. In your baptism, you have been set free because that which held onto you and enslaved you was killed. The Son has set you free.

And this freedom, this righteousness is yours through faith. Trust Him; Trust what the Lord and Creator of all things says. Is it irrational? Who cares! Does it not flow with modern scientific theory? Who cares. You are baptized and have received eternal life and salvation. You receive the true body and blood of Jesus in the bread and wine served at this altar, why? Because the Son has said it; the Word has spoken. And when God speaks, He speaks reality into existence.

Big stuff, this faith, isn't it? And even we who believe struggle to believe because we're still sinners living on this side of eternity, housed in sinful bodies that still have sinful desires and wants.

But even these bodies are being reformed and repatterned into the image of Christ, and on the Day of the Lord, the Day when He returns, these bodies will be fully renewed and glorified and we will finally have bodies and souls and eyes and ears that function as they are meant to function.

We await that day and live by faith looking for that day. We do the good works we're called and created to do, albeit not perfectly, but made perfect in Christ, nonetheless. We love God and we serve the neighbor with whatever gifts and abilities we have because what else are God's gifts for than to serve our neighbor? We have eternal life; we have the riches of heaven awaiting us. We don't have need to store up for ourselves here in this life things that neither compare to what awaits us nor come with us past the veil.

So, we use God's gifts instead for the church, for others, to bring Christ and His freedom to others. You have a friend or family member who doesn't believe? Serve them, show them your good works so that they might praise their Father in heaven. An unbeliever is still subject to God whether they acknowledge Him or not. Faith does not create God; God, the creator of all things, creates faith.

For as the hymn says, "Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving, perform thy duties faithfully, and trust His Word though undeserving, thou yet shall find it true for thee. God never yet forsook in need, the soul that trusted Him indeed." Amen.