

Grace Mercy and Peace are now yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

As I spoke with the kids today, our time together here in worship is a special one. We have processed the cross in, we changed the colors of our sanctuary, some of you have even come dressed in red. Today is the day that we remember one of the most influential and pivotal moments in history. Today is the day we remember as a church, the reformation.

500 years ago, a lowly monk, named Martin Luther, in the backwaters of Germany, in the middle of nowhere wrote 95 thoughts on a page seeking a simple debate. He saw activities in the life of the church that didn't quite square with what he read in Scripture. He saw the forgiveness of sins being sold in the streets for the hard-earned wealth of citizens. As Luther saw this, he feared for the Spiritual wellbeing of the people buying their salvation. He wanted to have a small, academic debate on the matter. He sought to discuss these issues to bring about a correction in some places of error and to move on for the benefit of the spiritual lives of the people. So he went through and did what was normal. He walked from where he taught to the front of the small church in his small town in his unimportant place in the world and hammered his debate topics onto the church door.

With this small act in his small corner of the world, Martin Luther set about a chain of events that has utterly changed the world and for once this isn't an exaggeration. Martin Luther and his list of debate topics brought about an eruption of activity. He was debated and scorned, He wrote and wrote defending and pleading his case. His works were brought before bishops, cardinals and even an emperor. His ideas changed the way people viewed the church. It shook the world politically as his writings challenged the pope and brought about war and religious strife. In a few short years it traveled the

ocean and planted itself in America. The reformation shaped everything from our education, science, church life and our identity in the west. It is difficult to list all the ways the reformation has impacted you, it has even brought you to this church this morning, to the very pew you are sitting in today. For better or worse the reformation has changed the world and we still feel the impact of a lowly monk today.

While the reformation had tremendous impact on the history of you and me, and the western world. For us here this morning, this historical impact, while it is tremendous it is unimportant. We do not celebrate this reformation day because of the many things it changed in our world. We celebrate today because Martin Luther, the reformers and the Reformation challenges us. It calls us to read Scripture and ask how we can be faithful to what it is telling us. It calls us to take seriously the words Jesus speaks in our Gospel reading for today: **“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”**

Jesus speaks this phrase to a small group of Jews that began to believe in Him and His message as he was preaching and teaching during His earthly ministry. Jesus had just finished teaching a rather difficult lesson and now This statement brought about more confusion in their group. Their question is a rather straight forward one: How can someone who isn't a slave be set free? What does a person need to be set free from if they are already free? They ask a question of Jesus: **“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say: You will become free?”**

There is great Irony in their question. While their ethnic Father Abraham was a free man, they forget the history of their people. From Exodus and exile, to the now Roman occupation of their home, they are and have been far from free. Yet their confusion falls on what it means to be set free. For them, they are in control, they can go where they

want and please without being ordered, this freedom Jesus preaches doesn't make sense to them if they in their minds are already free.

As we take the challenge of the reformation seriously, we are called to take Jesus seriously at His word. Can we find meaning in His words today? What does Jesus mean by freedom? We look to ourselves here in America and wonder how we can be set free if we are already free? As Americans we have pretty strong ideas about what it means to be free. Freedom for us is the ability to not be told what to do. We think of the freedom of long weekends, like we just had these last few days. Freedom from work responsibilities and free to spend our time how we choose. Is this the freedom Jesus speaks about? The freedom of self-determination? Our political identity in our country is also founded on this idea of freedom. We have certain rights that guarantee our freedom from our government. We can say what we want, vote for who we want and live lives of free men and women in this country. Is this the freedom Jesus is speaking about? Political Freedom?

Like the Jews Jesus is speaking to, we have trouble wrapping our heads around what Jesus could be saying. As we look at ourselves, we do not see slaves, but freemen. We do not need to be set free, we live in a free country and we are in control of ourselves. What freedom can Jesus give to us?

Jesus answers our question. Freedom isn't about politics or the ability to carve out one's own destiny. The freedom that Jesus offers is so much more than any shadow of freedom that we have in our world. Jesus answers our question and the question of the Jews with the truth. Jesus speaks plainly and tells us like it is. This isn't a comfortable truth or pleasant to hear, but that doesn't make it any less true. Jesus speaks and says: Truly, Truly, I say to you everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin." Our bondage isn't

to some political government, or a slave driver with a whip forcing us against our will. Our slaver is sin.

Jesus tells us the truth that we are sinful and our sins shackle us and make us slaves to it. We all experience this in life. We see it when we tell a little lie that slowly takes over our lives. It starts in small beginnings and ensnares us, it wraps us up and leads us on the path of further sin. As we lie more and more, covering for the first lie. It begins to wrap up and ensnare us until we can't take it anymore. It makes us its slave. It bends and forces our Will. We think of hurtful words that we speak against one another. That starts as a simple statement, but drives apart relationships, strains our love for one another and can lead to destruction of our ability to love someone. Our sins shackles us. We think of the lustful glance, that leads to website or late night tv show and we see the shackles surround and ensnare us, it leads us down paths we do not want to go. It makes us a slave. We see it as we desire after what our neighbor has. We are consumed with the thought of it. It takes over our thoughts and desires. We are drawn to get it no matter what the cost. Our sin shackles us, we forget all else until we get what we want, forsaking family, health and other responsibilities to get it. No matter the sin, it shackles, it drives us further into sin. We are made captive by our own doing.

Our sinful nature inherited and the sin that we actively live out in our lives have made us slaves. Jesus unfortunately speaks the truth. As we get lost in our lies, gossip, slander, lust and jealousy, As we are lost in our sins, we find ourselves shackled to our sins. We are faced with our inability to escape them. Our sin puts us in irons, it shackles us and marches us into our own destruction made by our own hands. We are marched to our own death and damnation. We confessed this earlier in service: 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. Jesus speaks the truth about us. We are slaves to our sin and we cannot escape on our own.

Yet Jesus isn't finished speaking. He speaks to us again. He speaks the truth. He says this: **"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."** The freedom that Jesus offers, is better than any freedom that we can imagine on this earth. It is fuller than a relaxing of some obligations, it is better than any right or freedom a government can give to you. The freedom that Jesus offers breaks the shackles of our sin that enslaves us to it. It crumbles the shackles of the lies that we tell about one another. It crumbles the shackles of our hurtful words that destroy our ability to love one another. It crumbles the cycle of lust that we are bound up in. It crumbles the shackles of our jealousy of what our neighbor has. It destroys the hold that sin has upon us and frees us from our march to destruction.

The truth is good news. The truth is that the Son has set us free. Jesus came to earth and lived a life free of the shackles that you and me know all too well. He walked amongst us sinless, perfect and not a slave to sin. The man who had no shackles of sin on Him, took on the world's shackles. He took from each and every one of us all of our sin and placed it upon himself. He took that sin to the cross where he unshackles the world from sin, death and the devil. In His resurrection he gives us hope for the future. Of a coming day where our sinful nature and the shackles that bind us will be gone. Then Jesus goes a step further. In the waters of Baptism, he calls you to him. He gives you His Holy Spirit and in faith we cling to the grace of our God through the faith that He gives. In baptism we are no longer slaves to sin, but rather we belong to Christ, the one who has set us free. Our chains are gone, we have been set free. Christ has claimed us as his own.

This is what we celebrate this reformation Sunday. Not the achievements of man, but rather a freeing of God's people. We celebrate the truth that Jesus speaks. The hard truth that we are sinful and hopelessly bound to our sin. Enslaved to it and destined for death. We also speak the truth of good news. That we have a savior who loved us enough to die and to rise again claiming us as his own and setting us free. This is our reformation joy. Not that this is new or an invention of 500 years ago, but rather we cling to the truth that Jesus, the disciples and the church has clung to. We celebrate that by the Holy Spirit we get to hear this truth with renewed clarity and joy. The truth that Jesus has set us Free.

So what are we to do with this reformation joy. This joy of being set free. What are we free to do? Free to do what? We do not turn to our understanding of freedom and do what we want. We haven't been set free to return to our bondage. We are set free that we can live as God has designed us. To be faithful. To flee from sin and its binding nature and to seek after love for one another and for God. As freed men and women of God we are sent from this place back into the world. We go unbound from sin to love and care for our neighbor. We go as those claimed by Christ into the world. We go to our families, not slaves to sin, but with the name of Jesus written on us. We go into our places of work, not bound, but Christ's. We go into our community free to love and to care for those God has put into our lives. This is what the truth that Jesus tells us leads us to. To love God and to love those God has put us with.

Yet as we feel those chains surrounding us again. As we sin and fall short of what God has set us free to be. When our sin shackles us and leads us to hurt others or to fall into sin. We gather back here. We gather every Sunday here to tell the truth. We remember our reformation challenge and speak the truth. We gather together and confess our sin, our shackles that grab hold of us. We also hear the truth proclaimed to us, that you are

a forgiven and claimed child of God. Christ has liberated you from sin, death and devil.
You are forgiven. You are free.

May He keep you in that Freedom, until he comes again. In Jesus' name, Amen.