

## Order of Service for Sunday October 25, 2020

Reformation Sunday

St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Lebanon, OR

Pastor Wally Gustav, Presider

### A Greeting

#### Today's Collect:

Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### First Reading -- Jeremiah 31: 31-34

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,<sup>[a]</sup> says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

- ✦ Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's People
- ✦ Thanks be to God

#### Psalm 46

- <sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.
- <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
- <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
- <sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.
- <sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.
- <sup>6</sup> The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
- <sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
- <sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD;

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see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.  
10 “Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth.”  
11 The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

### **Second Reading – Romans 3: 19-28**

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ<sup>[a]</sup> for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement<sup>[b]</sup> by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.<sup>[c]</sup> Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

- ✦ Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s People
- ✦ Thanks be to God

### **A Reading from the Gospel of John 8: 31-36**

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?”

Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

- ✦ This is the Gospel of the Lord
- ✦ Thanks be to God

Sermon: “Freedom Because Of God’s Grace” – John 8: 31-36” Pastor Wally Gustav

Let us pray. . . . Gracious and Eternal God, you shower us with many and various forms of grace. By your Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds, our eyes and ears so that we may live with the peace and the power, the courage and strength that your grace provides as a gift to us your people. Be with us now in this time and let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable offerings to you, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen

M-A-R-T-I-N. Martin is a familiar name to us – perhaps the name of a friend or family member. Martin is the saint for whom our church is named. He is one of many fine role models in the history of the Church. And as we know, his feast day each year is November 11.

On November 10, 1483, a baby boy was born in Eisleben, Germany to faithful Roman Catholic Couple by the name of Hans and Margarethe Luther. The very next day – November 11 – this couple took their infant son to the local Roman Catholic Church to be baptized. At the climactic moment, the priest said to the father – What shall we name this child? Because November 11 was the feast for Saint Martin – the father said that his son shall be named Martin. So the parents walked home that day with their newly baptized son – Martin Luther. This newly baptized son is the same Martin Luther who as an adult became a major person in the Reformation of the 1500’s.

One of the important dates in the history of the Reformation is October 31, 1517. On this date – the day before All Saints Day – is when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses or 95 statements to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. These 95 theses offered critiques of the faith and life and practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

And on this day – Reformation Sunday - it seems appropriate that as God’s people – as Christians – you and I hear something from Martin Luther. Specifically, I would like to share some additional thoughts that Martin Luther made concerning God’s grace. First of all, God’s grace is God’s undeserved love for us. In other words, God’s grace is a gift. Secondly, God’s grace is the only message that we pastors have to preach. And thirdly, Luther said – God’s grace is a very dangerous thing about which to preach. With these three introductory thoughts in mind I would like to share some additional thoughts about God’s grace. And specifically, to talk about how today’s Gospel reading relates to God’s grace.

To share with you a story about Katie, who was a teenager. She lived in an average sized town in Oregon. Two days earlier Katie had earned her driver’s license. On this particular night, Katie’s parents were going out to dinner with some friends. Before they left, Katie’s parents gave her clear and strict instructions – even though she had earned her license two days earlier, she was not to use the family car while they were gone to dinner. But after her parents left for their dinner date, Katie decided to borrow the family car without their permission. Katie’s reasoning was simple. She could run her errand and would have the car back home and in the garage before her parents found out. So Katie drove the car out of the garage and onto the street. She was being so very, very careful. But then the unexpected

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happened. Katie was waiting at a red light. Suddenly, she was rear ended by a car that was going too fast.

Quickly Katie drove the car home and parked it in the garage. But what should she do? Even though it was painful, Katie decided to be honest and tell her parents the entire story. When her parents returned home, Katie told them everything. Then her father and Katie went out to the garage to examine the car. After a long – hard – silent look, Katie’s father said – I am quite sure that the car insurance will cover the damages. Katie looked at her father and said – dad, dad can you ever forgive me for disobeying you. Her father replied – my daughter, I have forgiven you – therefore you can forget about it.

For the next few days, Katie continued to feel guilty about disobeying her parents. On the fifth day, she went to her father and said – Dad, if the insurance company raises the premiums because of my car accident, I am willing to get a second part time job and pay the difference. Katie’s father looked at his daughter right in the eye and said – What car accident? Katie’s father had forgiven his daughter. He had forgotten about his daughter’s disobedience. And because Katie’s father had forgiven and forgotten, Katie’s disobedience was gone forever from her father’s memory.

In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus says – “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.” God’s grace is God’s gift to each of us. God’s grace is personified in Jesus Christ makes us free. Because of Jesus Christ we are no longer prisoners to our sins – the times we have disobeyed God by our actions, our words, and our thoughts. We do not need to carry around the ball and chain called our past failures. Instead, you and I are free. We are free from the shackles and slavery of our sins.

Christ has paid the price for our sinful ways. In his explanation to the second article of the Apostles’ Creed, Martin Luther clearly says, “Christ has ransomed us not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and his innocent sufferings and death.” Because of Christ we are free. We are free from the slavery of sin. We are free from the burden of our sins. Therefore, we live with the peace of God, which passes all understandings. Because of Jesus Christ, God has a Teflon memory. Therefore our sins are forgiven, forgotten, and gone forever.

Think for a moment about some sin or some wrong that you have committed. Perhaps that sin or that wrong still haunts you. Perhaps, it was yesterday or a year ago or ten years ago. Perhaps it was a wrong that may cause your heart to ache. Perhaps, it was a wrong that causes you to chuckle with shame or embarrassment. This sin may even cause you to fret or perhaps even to worry.

Today, Christ wants you to know the truth. And the truth will make you free. Because of God’s grace that is personified in Jesus Christ, you and I are free. We are free from the slavery of our past sins. We are free from those times when we have sinned with our actions, our words, and our thoughts by what we have done and what we have left undone.

And listen closely, let me be very clear – we are not free from the slavery of sin because we are good. Instead, we are free because God is good. God is good and as a gift God has given us Jesus Christ. Our sins are washed away because of the blood of Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus Christ, you and I have received a gift. We have received the entire forgiveness of all our sins. We are free. Our sins are forgiven, forgotten, and gone forever. That’s the Good News we celebrate today.

God does not love us because we are good. Good things do not happen in our lives because we are good. You and I will never – and that’s a long time – we will never possess enough goodness for God to love us. We will never possess enough righteousness for God to love us. Instead, God loves us to make us good – to live and love as His people. We share the love of God and if necessary, we use a few words. As God’s people, we know the truth and the truth will make us free. And that’s the Good News we celebrate today. In the name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

***“A Prayer for Leadership” by Sister Joan Chittister***

Give us, O God, leaders whose hearts are large enough to match the breadth of our own souls and give us souls strong enough to follow leaders of vision and wisdom.

- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

In seeking a leader, let us seek more than development of ourselves— though development we hope for, more than security for our own land— though security we need, more than satisfaction for our wants— though many things we desire.

- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

Give us the hearts to choose the leader who will work with other leaders to bring safety to the whole world.

- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

Give us leaders who lead this nation to virtue without seeking to impose our kind of virtue on the virtue of others.

- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

Give us a government that provides for the advancement of this country without taking resources from others to achieve it.

- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

Give us insight enough ourselves to choose as leaders those who can tell strength from power, growth from greed, leadership from dominancy, and real greatness from the trappings of grandiosity.

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- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

We trust you, Great God, to open our hearts to learn from those to whom you speak in different tongues and to respect the life and words of those to whom you entrusted the good of other parts of this globe.

- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

We beg you, Great God, give us the vision as a people, to know where global leadership truly lies, to pursue it diligently, to require it to protect human rights for everyone everywhere.

- ✦ Lord in your mercy
- ✦ Hear our Prayer

We ask these things, Great God, with minds open to your work and hearts that trust in your eternal care.

***Amen***

### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

### **Dr. Martin Luther's Morning Prayer**

We give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected us through the night from all harm and danger. We ask that you would also protect us today from sin and all evil, so that our life and actions may please you. Into your hands we commend ourselves: our bodies, our souls, and all that is ours. Let your holy angels be with us, so that the wicked foe may have no power over us. **Amen**

### **Blessings**

### **Dismissal**