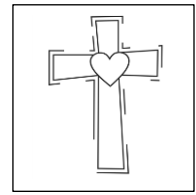


Perley Lutheran Parish  
October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Reformation Sunday



Gathering Hymn: A Mighty Fortress is our God  
**A mighty fortress is our God, A sword and shield victorious:  
He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod and wins salvation glorious.  
The old satanic foe has sworn to work us woe!  
With craft and dreadful might He arms himself to fight.  
On earth he has no equal.**

Welcome and Announcements

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, +one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. Amen

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Faithful God,

**Have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgement on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of +Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world.

Prayer of the Day

**O Lord God, you are the holy lawgiver, you are the salvation of your people. By you Spirit renew us in your covenant of love, and train us to care tenderly for all our neighbors, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

Psalms 46 (Read Responsively)

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. **Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;** though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. **There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.** God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. **The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.** The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. **Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.** He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. **"Be still and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth."** The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

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, 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.

Holy Gospel according John 8:31-36, **Glory to you O Lord**

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.

The Gospel of our Lord, **Praise to you, O Christ**

### **Children's Message**

What does this flag remind you of? (4<sup>th</sup> of July, America etc....) It's a symbol of our freedom - we honor all of the men and women who have served in the military and who have fought to defend our freedom.

We enjoy a lot of freedom. We are free to come to church and worship, we are free to choose what we want to be when we grow up, we are free to choose where we want to live, we are free to choose most of the things that affect our daily lives. This might come as a surprise to some of you -- but did you know that freedom isn't free? That's right, someone had to pay the price for us to have the freedom that we enjoy. There are men and women right here in this room this morning and watching who have helped to pay that price. Some have served in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, or Coast Guard. Many of them have fought in wars and some may have been wounded. There are probably some people here this morning who had loved ones who gave their lives fighting for our freedom.

Yes, we have a lot of freedom, but the greatest freedom that we have is the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus. The Bible teaches that the penalty for sin is death, but you and I have been set free from this penalty. We have been set free because Jesus paid the penalty. The Bible tells us that Jesus died to set us free from the penalty of sin. Instead of death, we have been given eternal life. This freedom wasn't free, Jesus paid the price.

Let us always remember to stop and thank God for those who have paid the price for our freedom. Let us also remember to thank God for Jesus, who has set us free from the penalty for sin, because he was willing to pay the price.

Dear God, thank you for the freedom that we enjoy in our country. We are thankful for those who paid the price for that freedom, but even more important, we thank you for the freedom we have because Jesus was willing to pay the penalty for our sin. Amen.

### **Message**

Grace and peace to you, from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

OK, I cannot tell you how ready I am for the election to be over. No matter what side of politics you are on – the red side, the blue side, the liberal side, the conservative side – I cannot imagine that you are sitting around waiting for another political ad on TV or in your mailbox. I get 4-5 flyers in my mailbox every single day at my house because my youngest son and I voted different from each other 4 years ago and therefore we get mail from everyone on both sides. We are almost finished with it and while we all know that

living in this country we are given so many more opportunities and gifts because of our democratic beliefs – it's crazy to think about our Gospel today actually being a bit of a political advertisement as well.

In our world we can find very many and very different ideas of what freedom is. People and nations prioritize freedom in different ways and although Jesus wasn't a politician you could say he was at times quite political. When Jesus spoke of freedom it wasn't necessarily about politics though, it was freedom from our sins and the bondage that being sinful would give us. He was the only one – the only one who could free us from that sin and he wanted them and us to know that. He isn't coming to us like most politicians though – he doesn't have a new health plan, he doesn't have a new tax plan, he isn't even asking for an endorsement he is simply offering up himself.

Sounds crazy but not only did they not accept his offer but there are way too many times that we don't accept it either. Sure, we all like the sound of freedom, but there isn't a one of us here or out there that doesn't allow or chose to imprison ourselves by giving in to our sinful ways. We do it, we give in to temptations, we hold grudges and don't forgive our neighbors, we let our hearts grow hard rather giving all the difficult things in our lives over to God. Whether its time or debt or crazy lifestyles – we all find ourselves bound to them rather than God sometimes and while we know of the never ending love and grace that God has for us we don't always share that same love and grace with others as we should.

There is nothing that you and I can do ourselves to reach this freedom that God is giving us – only Jesus can set us free and only our accepting and admitting that Jesus is the one can we know that it is really true. To emphasize and celebrate Jesus is for each and all of us to admit that we cannot free ourselves; it's to admit that we need Jesus. Period – we need Jesus.

Freedom – we of course think about freedom when July 4<sup>th</sup> comes around each year – the freedom and independence of our country. As Christians we also think about Freedom on Reformation Sunday – the day that Martin Luther nailed those 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg. While both of these important events give us a remembrance of our freedom, they also have significant differences in which our Gospel helps us to see.

Contextually, in Jesus' time the Jewish believers were offended by the notion that Jesus was claiming that they may not be truly free. Being "descendants of Abraham" in their mind automatically placed them in a state of being "slaves to no one". But that notion – their assumption – showed how really ignorant they were in regards to what real freedom meant. The Jews were enslaved to foreign powers for hundreds and hundreds of years.

We as Americans sometimes are ignorant to what freedom means for us as well. Of course we celebrate that there are no foreign rulers controlling us, and that we have freedom to worship as we please, speak our minds if and when we want to and all those other rights that we were given in the "Bill of Rights" way back in 1789. We believe we have the right to do our "own thing" but let's be honest, aside from that we really don't even think much about freedom.

As Christians though, we should have a clearer understanding of what freedom means in regards to God. We are set free so that you and I can be all that God has intended us to be. Through the cross, through the life and death of Jesus on that cross, we are freed to live a new and ever-lasting life with God.

As Americans we are all aware of the cost, the sacrifice of lives all those years ago, to obtain our freedom. As Christians, there was indeed that sacrifice and loss of life but it was through Jesus Christ – not ours. Not you and I giving our lives - because of the sins we commit - but the life of Jesus who gave it all so we didn't have to. Sure there continue to be those who fight to take away our freedoms as Americans – people and nations who would like to control what and how we do things here. But we don't have to worry about that as Christians, Jesus gave us freedom once and for all by going to the cross for us.

Freedom does at times get a little convoluted in our lives. I mean are we really free when allow things to control our lives? Think about how we at times let our schedule or calendar rule our lives. Or how about feeling imprisoned to our financial responsibilities. What about those times when we find ourselves thinking that bigger is better and that we want more than what we need. And when we think this way we may find

ourselves allowing worry and concern - for keeping up that pace or those goals - to rule our hearts and minds. That's not freedom is it??

Paul reminds us in Galatians 5 as Christians, to not allow ourselves to be slaves. He writes "It is our freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." We have the gift of living free by abiding in God. Accepting and acknowledging the truth of God's love and God's forgiveness. When we sin, we ask for and receive forgiveness. We receive forgiveness, not guilt or shame or are burdened by the fact that we have sinned. No, we are forgiven. When we encounter those difficult times in our life, we can give our worry and our fears to God. Put those worries into God's hands and rejoice in the knowledge that God is with us and comforts and loves us. When we see the needs of others and live a life of service to those who really need – we guard against being enslaved to selfishness and self-centeredness. It's not easy – I know!

I am no different – we are ALL sinners. We all take advantage of our freedoms as Americans and as Christians. BUT.... it's how we use the freedoms we have that is most important of all. It's coming to church, or watching worship. It's celebrating our freedom to gather and worship as brothers and sisters in Christ. We have our freedom to love one another and be good disciples of our country and our neighbors.

It's not a patriotic holiday of course – although with all that is going on with the upcoming elections it might be helpful for us all to be reminded of the beautiful and quite significant words of the Battle Hymn of the Republic. Let me remind you of the last verse of the song:

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea  
With a glory in the bosom that transfigured you and me  
As he died to make men holy, let us live to make men free  
While God is marching on.*

We will be exercising our American freedom as we vote in the coming days – if you haven't already. As Christians the work is already done for our freedom and our rights. We have already been given the gift of everlasting love and life because of the Son. Let us live to make men free – as the song reminded us – free with not only civil freedom but the freedom that only Jesus the Christ can give. Amen.

Special Hymn of the Day: Jesus Paid It All  
I hear the savior say thy strength indeed is small  
Child of weakness, watch and pray, find in me thine all in all

Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain  
He washed it white as snow

And when before the throne I stand in him complete  
Jesus died my soul to save my lips shall still repeat

Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain  
He washed it white as snow

Oh, praise the one who paid my debt  
And raises life up from the dead  
Oh, praise the one who paid my debt  
And raises life up from the dead

Apostles Creed

***I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.***

***I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian/catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen***

Prayers of the people (Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer**)

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

In your love, you speak to your church. Give courage and the bond of love to all who gather in your name, that this love turns toward our neighbors. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In your love, we remember those who were dear to us and now rest in you. We give thanks for Martin Luther and all who seek to reform and renew your church. Give us courage to live out your gospel. Revealing your love until our days on earth have ended. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In your love, as you set a table in the presence of enemies, so bless the efforts of diplomats, peace workers and world leaders who navigate conflict and conflict – especially those that continue to be conflicted regarding best practices and racial disparity. May leaders proceed with dialogue and understanding, so that justice and peace prevail? Teach us to overcome fear with hope, meet hate with love, and welcome one another as we would welcome you. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

In your love, even when we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are mourning as they deal with tremendous loss, we ask that you continue to send healing to those dealing with illness and recovery. We lift up those within our congregation and those that have reached out to us for prayers, like Alana and Jeff, like Kirk and Brent, like Paxley and Vern, like Veronica and Lisa and all of those that we now name in our own hearts. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Words of Institution

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.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Meal

After Communion Prayer:

We give you thanks, gracious God that you have once again fed us with food beyond compare, the body and blood of Christ. Lead us from this place nourished and forgiven. Amen

Blessing

Mothering God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life. Amen.

Sending Hymn: Amazing Grace

**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,**

**That saved a wretch like me!**

**I once was lost, but now am found;**

**Was blind, but now I see.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you. **Thanks be to God.**

**Mark Your Calendars:**

Sunday November 1<sup>st</sup> - Nora 9am service. Kirkebo – 11am service.

Sunday November 8<sup>th</sup> – Kirkebo 9am service. Nora 11am service. – Council meeting at Kirkebo after service

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