

Reformation Sunday
October 31, 2021

The world is in rebellion against God. Born into this world, our inclination is towards our own wants and needs and we do not have fear of the Lord, nor do we have love for Him. Yet, there is a reflection of His love in us, for this is as He created us to be. We see this in each persons desire to be loved, seeking to find what is missing. We begin, each doing it in their own way.

Ultimately, there will be two kinds of people: those who see the light of truth shining and come to understand that they are not their own person, but were created by God and those who will continue believing that they are the author of their own destiny. Pride is the central factor which drives us. Behind pride is self motivation. What motivates you?

Some will think on this and others will not. The Lord has created us with the ability to not only think and reason, but to also comprehend things as they are. Not as we want them to be, but as they are. Pride enforces wishful thinking and we can be carried away in the fantasies of our own mind.

The time came when the entrenched pattern of the how and why of what people were doing was questioned. The Lord has His reasons for these things. It has happened a few times, as we hear in the stories of the Old Testament. Our sinfulness brings us to the place of self-destruction and the Lord adjusts the playing field. Such was the case at the time of the Reformation.

It seems to me that there are two directions we humans tend to take when it comes to the place where we are looking at things. We either focus on the how, or upon the what (or, in this case the who). One side of the reformers focused upon the how, but Luther focused upon the who behind this existence. Certain traditions were well established and a few needed to be corrected. The primary problem was that too many, focused upon the how of religion seemingly lost sight of who this was all for. Although many went through the motions, there was a glaring lack of understanding of why these things were and are done.

The sayings which many of us have heard over and over again were a new way of re-framing the Gospel into an easily understood perspective. A by-product of this was the coined phrases which came later and summed up the heart of understanding in what we call the solas: Christ, faith, grace, Scripture, and to God be the glory alone.

The first thing to realize is that we need to be saved. That is, we are in a predicament which we are unable to get out of and someone else must rescue us. We were born in sin, that is separated from God, and do not know how to fulfill the longing that is in every human heart. God must be the One who acts upon us and this action requires our willing participation. He must do it, but He will not if we are not willing. As long as we live being driven by self-will, salvation can never happen. A gift God gives to those who are willing is faith; the ability to trust in what is not seen and the assurance of what is hoped for.

The unseeable God has given us His revelation to awaken the hearts of those who do not see. He offers healing so that we can see. The light shines in the darkness and as many as see the light – which is the gift of faith – He continues the journey for us into the light. Think of standing in the light as faith. Then, there needs to be an action – this is belief. If it helps you, think of grace as receiving what is necessary to move in the light. Perhaps it may help to think in terms of a deer in the headlights. If the deer does not move, it may be killed. If the light is a warning and movement happens, the light, causing movement, brings the ability to live another day. A weak illustration, but the point is to understand that faith and belief are connected, one to

the other. This brings us to the reality that our Savior is the One who moves us. By the power of the Holy Spirit we understand that Jesus is our Savior and are given the words, "You are the Christ."

How do we know these things? We have before us Scripture. God's word is not a talisman to be used, but a guide book to lead us ever deeper into the truth of eternity. It seems that many think of the bible as a book of "do's" and "don'ts." It is a book which shows us God's love for what He has created and the invitation to come into His love. The way is clearly defined, but it takes the light to see it.

It is not your glory or mine, but what God has, is, and will do which is the focus. In simple words, it is not about us, but about Him. When we begin to comprehend these things, we are in the place where we can understand why we do what we do. When we move with belief in faith, we move beyond where we are and see where we are going. You and I may not know fully what God is going to do, but we do know that He will make us to be like Christ; a willing, obedient child of the Heavenly Father.

Freedom is not the ability to do as we please. The world has believed that lie and look where it has brought us. Freedom is living in reality and acting within appropriate bounds. I am free to do incredibly dumb things, but that is not freedom. I am able to exercise my will to do these dumb things, but that is not wisdom. If Christ makes us free, then we are free indeed. Free to live into the life set before us in faith to journey to become like Christ, which is the order of things that God has created.

We are born slaves to sin. That is, we do not fear the Lord, nor love Him. Christ tells us that if we abide in His word – and He is the Word, so abide in Him – then we are His disciples. A disciple is one who learns. Jesus has told us that we are to go out in His name, immersing others in the Holy Triune name and make of them those who are able to learn from Him how to become like Him, and learn how to obey all that the Word speaks. As the Lord said of Abraham, "It was reckoned unto him as righteousness," so also He speaks to those who have faith that they may embark on the journey of faith.

We all know that time measures out the moments one by one. We hear, and are called to believe, that we need to follow Jesus. In the following, God will make of us what He will make of us. This journey of faith is coming into the hands of the Lord and watching as He shapes us into His children. We are moved from self-will to the place that Christ demonstrated for us when He said, "Not my will, but Thine be done." May the Father's will be done in, through, by me, and to His glory. This is the object of our faith: to be led by the Lord for His sake and for His purpose.

We were created to serve. Sinfully, we know how to serve ourselves. We serve our community, but do we do so with a pure heart? Yes, we must start out as slaves – for that is what Scripture tells us we are. First, slaves to sin, death, and the devil, but then, through grace, to be slaves to the Lord. The journey continues and we shall be transformed to be children of the Heavenly Father. What is set before us is the pattern for all who believe. For each of us, it will take the twist and turns that come in this life, but it will cause the living word, through the living water to spring up in us, bubbling over to touch others in the way we have been touched by the truth which has been given us through Christ.

Live in, through, and for Christ alone. Hear the Word above all other words. Live in the faith you have been given, knowing you have all the grace you need. To God alone be the glory. Amen