

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 46
Romans 3:19-28
John 8:31-36

Sermon October 31st, 2021

Jesus Sets Us Free

When we meet someone who we are interested in starting up a relationship with we start by getting to know them. We sit down with them over a coffee (**Image**). We ask questions. We listen. We learn about them by having a conversation with them.

When we want to know about people in our community we look up to, like a movie star or a hockey player or a theologian or a social leader, or an important historical person, we find articles or books that are written about these people or by these people (**Image**). We look for information that will help us know these people better. So, we can live like them.

Well, we hear in our gospel this morning, that we get to know Jesus by reflecting on the Word of God. The Word of God that teaches us about Jesus, and about what Jesus envisions for our world.

We do this by reading our Bible (**Image**). Studying it. Talking about it with others. And by coming to worship to hear the Word of God being proclaimed by someone who has studied the Scriptures more extensively than we have.

When we invest time into our faith to ask Jesus questions. To listen to what Jesus has to say to us. Then we get to know Jesus. We grow in relationship with Jesus.

For two years of our Lutheran journey, we go through Confirmation. A ministry that helps us learn about God and how to live out our faith in our lives. We read the Bible together and talk about what the Bible is saying about Jesus. We learn about what our church has said about Jesus and how the church lives out Jesus' teachings in the world. So, that we too, can come away from Confirmation with a better understanding of who Jesus is, and how we are to live out Jesus' teachings in our lives.

For two years, we get to know Jesus. We grow in relationship with Jesus. But, we also, get to know our classmates. We grow in relationship with fellow Christians.

Being the church is getting to know Jesus, but it is also getting to know each other (**Image**). Or in other words, being the church is being in relationship with Jesus and with one another.

We are not invited to live out our faith alone. We are invited to live out our faith as the body of Christ. To work together to proclaim Christ's love and grace to those we meet.

Confirmation helps us forge those relationships in our lives to help us imitate Christ.

As we continue listening to what Jesus has to say to us in our gospel this morning; we hear that when we know Jesus. When we are in relationship with Jesus, then we are set free to be the people God created us to be.

We are set free to expect the unexpected. To live in the unknown with faith. To believe that whatever path we walk down Jesus will find a way to reach us with God's healing and love.

We are set free to love people as Jesus loves us. Not allowing the oppressive powers in this world to dictate our lives by telling us who is welcome and who is not. We are set free to stand with the marginalized people in our community knowing that Jesus is standing with us (**Image**). We are set free to stand up to those who hurt us knowing that Jesus wants more for our lives than to live in oppressive environments.

Jesus throughout his ministry steps outside the bounds of what is considered status quo to connect with those people who have been rejected by society for one reason or another. Jesus loves us even though he faces push back from the oppressive powers that exist in this world.

When we know Jesus, we are set free to believe in a God who forgives us when we fall short. A God who lifts us up when we hit the ground. A God who breathes on us the Holy Spirit so we can live the life God created us to live.

Five hundred and four years ago, a person by the name of Martin Luther saw a church of people who lived in fear of God's wrath. A church of people who didn't live like they were set free.

So, Luther decided to bring forward some ideas for change (**Image**). So, people could reconnect with this promise that when they know Jesus, they are set free from bondage. From oppression. From fear.

Luther argued that God's grace frees us to love in ways we never thought possible. Luther argued that we needed to be a church who empowered people to live out this love in the world. Not to be people who live in fear or are driven by fear. Paralyzed to love our neighbors.

Being a Reforming Church is all about changing ourselves when those oppressive powers seem to be dictating our lives, so we can continue to be free to love others in the way Jesus loves us.

If we learn anything from Confirmation it is that Jesus invites us into a relationship with him. Jesus invites us to get to know him so that we can be free to love others as Jesus loves us. With grace. Not with wrath. With understanding. Not with bias. With hospitality. Not with inhospitality.

If we learn anything from the Reformation it is that Jesus is changing our hearts daily, so we can love others even when things in our world are changing so rapidly. That in all the different circumstances and situations we come across, that we can find ways to reconnect with Christ's unconditional love for us. So too, love others with this same love.

Over the centuries the church, the body of Christ, us, have had to change to meet the needs of people in the community. The church is continually reforming as it adjusts to new hurts and pains that people are suffering from in our world.

This is what it means to commemorate Reformation Day. To identify as a Reforming community who wants to grow in relationship with Christ and one another. Whom wants to grow in love for God and our neighbor. In all times and places.

This is what it means to be confirmed. To identify as a reforming person who wants to grow in relationship with Christ and one another. Whom wants to grow in love for God and for our neighbor. In all times and places.

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for loving us. For continually reforming our hearts so that we can love others in the diversity of circumstances we find ourselves in. Thank you for giving us the Word so we can know your Son. So, we can know you. So, we can be in relationship with you. **Amen.**