

**The Truth Has Set Us Free**  
**October 31, 2021**

**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is a day of celebration. A day when nineteen of our young people will be Confirmed. A day we celebrate the Reformation. And a day we celebrate the truth that sets us free.

As we heard in our Gospel reading, Jesus was speaking with those who believed in Him, but they identified themselves as descendants of Abraham. They trusted and believed that their physical lineage was more important than their spiritual birth. So He said to them, ***"If you ABIDE in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."***

Not only did Jesus want them to listen to Him but also follow Him. For while they believed in Him, they did so superficially. And yet, He wanted them to hold to His teachings that they might give up their former way of life, follow Him, and remain in a relationship with Him. One that allowed His Word and presence not only to challenge but to change them. That way they might believe He is God's incarnate Word and be their Savior.

While they knew of original sin, when the serpent said to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, ***"Did God really say***

***that you shouldn't eat from any tree in the garden?"*** ...And they ate fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They should've known that ever since that time, the truth has often been, and continues to be at times, somewhat elusive for mankind. Nonetheless, even if the devil attacks God's truth, why would they need to be free?

They knew about actual and inherited sin. They reasoned that those who weren't as fortunate as they were, must've committed or inherited their sin. And while they believed in the words of Jesus, still they relied more on their own physical lineage. Because Abraham was a free man who believed God, and He was credited by God as righteous, as one who came from the physical lineage of Abraham, they reasoned that they were righteous as well. And while they weren't in physical bondage, unknowingly they were in spiritual bondage.

Sin is like that; it often blinds us to the truth. And while we don't always like it when our sins are pointed out to us, Jesus had come to be their Savior. And they were elevating their lineage higher than even the Messiah Himself. Just like when we think that we know better than God Himself at times, there's no escaping it, our thoughts, words, and deeds, can keep us in bondage to sin. All of us have sinned. It really doesn't make any difference if you commit great sins, many, a few, or even one sin. Sin is sin. And as St. James once wrote, ***"...whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."*** (James 2:10) We need Jesus.

Unlike those descendants of Abraham in our Gospel reading who were blind to their sin, Martin Luther knew that He was a sinner. And yet, He struggled in his faith. When He studied God's Word, he found that even if you worked hard doing good deeds, you could never cover your sin. And while the church of his day taught otherwise, he continued to struggle. He even struggled with the fact that the church was teaching that a person could buy their way out of purgatory. And yet, when Luther looked to see what the Word of God said about purgatory, he couldn't find anything. And so, struggling with a sin-burdened conscience, he thought that the righteousness of God was the wrath of a Holy God. That is until the truth of the Word of God was revealed to him, and he nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg Germany. Because it's the righteousness of God that covers sin. The perfect sacrifice of Jesus, who willingly shed His blood to cover all our sins. That we might be forgiven by His innocent suffering and death on the cross. He is the truth that sets us free from the bondage of sin. He is our Savior. Not our good works. Not anything that we or our relatives might have done. Only Jesus. He is the incarnate Word of God who transforms us and sets us free to be children of God.

Children of God in an ongoing relationship with Him. One that begins with the waters of Holy Baptism. And today is being confirmed with nineteen of our young people. This liberating truth isn't a matter of head knowledge, and it isn't just about learning facts or agreeing with church doctrine. While they're important to learn, oftentimes they're memorized, recited, and easily forgotten. What is

most important is the truth that sets us free to be children of God and His ongoing presence in our lives.

And today, we celebrate the fact that our Confirmands have taken time to deepen their relationship with Him. A relationship, that by the grace of God, will grow by leading them back to the truth of God's Word again and again. One that will continue to challenge them, transform them, and help them to speak the truth in love to others, just like it does with the rest of us. And it is only by the grace of God that we have an ongoing, living relationship with Him that lasts forever. The truth has set us free to be His children. That we might abide in His WORD, follow our Lord and Savior by FAITH all our days, and Receive His means of GRACE through His Word and Sacraments as well as all that He has done, continues to do, and has promised to do for us in the future.

So, we celebrate today. Today is a day when nineteen of our young people will be Confirmed. A day we celebrate the Reformation. And a day we celebrate the truth that sets us free to be children of God. For that, we give Him thanks and praise!

In Jesus' name, Amen.