

500 Forward: *It's Still All About Jesus.*

500 Forward: 17th Sunday after Pentecost

Why are we celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation? What does it matter? Why is it 500 Forward, not 500 backward? 500 Forward!

Sola Gratia. 18th Sunday after Pentecost

The power of God's Grace in a world that lives by the law. How God's Grace frees us to become everything that He wants us to be. Grace Alone!

Sola Fide. 19th Sunday after Pentecost

What is Saving Faith? Faith without works is dead...what does it mean to trust in the words of communion today; "Given and shed 'for me'?" Faith Alone!

Sola Scriptura: 20th Sunday after Pentecost

Why is it important that we have a book of scripture that doesn't change? Why is it important we're not just adding a bunch of books to it over the years? Scripture Alone!

Solus Christus: Christ Alone! Reformation Sunday

Sermon Bumper Videos: <https://vimeo.com/album/4686326>

500Forward

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Question of the Day: Why are we celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation? What does it matter? Why is it called 500 Forward and not 500 backward?

Theme: We are a church moving Forward into the future with the power of the Gospel of Christ! While we embrace our heritage and love our past, we cannot cling to anything but Jesus! The theme of this sermon is to begin the sermon series by explaining that, just like the church in Luther's day, we all need a Reformation to go forward. Our world needs to be reformed. Our Church body needs to be reformed. Our Churches need to be reformed and our own individual hearts need to be reformed by Christ, through Grace, Faith and the power of His Holy Word.

Theme Verse: Ezekiel 18:31-32

Hymn of the Day: Holy, Holy, Holy.

As We Gather: As we gather today, think about what it means for something to stand the test of time? What does it mean for something to be truly memorable? What does it mean when buildings can last for hundreds of years, or artwork hanging in a museum is dated back to the 15th or 16th centuries. For something to last that long, it must be truly special. Today we begin a sermon series in which we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. In order for this event to have impacted our lives over so many centuries, it must be truly special. But today we do not simply look back at the past, but we also look forward to what God's Church will look like in the future.

Creative Liturgical Elements *(note, because of the wide range of liturgical elements that churches use, this is not a complete list of all liturgical elements. Each church can include or exclude whichever of these elements as they see fit)*

Opening Litany and Invocation:

P: Lord God, You are our Mighty Fortress (Psalm 46:1)

C: **Our Help in times of trouble. (Psalm 46:1)**

P: Lord our God, You are our Refuge and our strength (Psalm 46:1)

C: You are the Rock of our salvation. (Psalm 62:2)

P: Lord our God, You are our deliverer, You fight for Your people. (Psalm 18:2)

C: The Battle is not ours, it is the Lord's. (2 Chron. 20:15)

P: Lord our God, You raise up the Lowly and the humble in spirit and you bring down the proud and the arrogant. (Matt. 23:12)

C: Humble yourself before the LORD and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Confession:

[\[Stand or kneel as your church custom permits\]](#)

P: Heavenly Father, this morning, we come before you in humility, knowing that our lives are not what they ought to be, and that we are not following you like we should.

C: Father, we know that we need to be Reformed. Like the Church in Luther's day, we have gone our own way. We have followed our own hearts. We have been lovers of ourselves, lovers of money and lovers of things. We have been selfish and have not put you or our neighbor first. We have not been prepared to share the Gospel. We have not been willing to reprove, rebuke, or encourage one another like we should. We have not been patient in receiving Your instruction for our lives. We have not always tolerated sound doctrine, but instead we have had itching ears and have gathered around us teachers who suit our own desires, and we have turned away from Your truth to the myths of our world. (2 timothy 4) For this we humbly come before You and pray, restore us, renew us and reform us through Your Blood and your word...Lord have Mercy, Christ, have Mercy, Lord have mercy upon us. Amen.

(Time of Silent confession and meditation)

Absolution:

P: In 2 Corinthians chapter five (17-18), Holy Scripture says that “from now on we regard no one according to the flesh. Although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and because of that we have been made new and are daily reformed through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. And as a called and ordained servant of the Word I hereby forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Psalm 18 (1-6; 16-18; 46-50):

P: I love you, O LORD, my strength.

C: The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer,

P: My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,

C: my shield, the horn of my salvation, and my stronghold.

P: I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,

C: and I am saved from my enemies.

P: The cords of death encompassed me;

C: the torrents of destruction assailed me;

P: The cords of Sheol entangled me;

C: The snares of death confronted me.

P: In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help.

C: From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

P: He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters.

C: He rescued me from my enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

P: They confronted me in the day of my calamity,

C: but the LORD was my support.

P: The LORD lives, blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—

C: Who rescued me from my enemies;

P: Yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me;

C: You delivered me from the man of violence.

P: For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.

C: Great salvation he brings to his king,

P: and shows steadfast love to his anointed,

C: to David and his offspring forever.

Collect:

P: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the wonderful heritage of faith that we have been given through the event of the reformation of your church. Today Lord, we see that this reformation is not complete. We live in a world of brokenness and despair, of pain and suffering and just like the church in Luther's day, our world needs to be reformed. Our Churches need to be reformed and our own hearts need to be reformed by Your Son's blood, through Grace, Faith and the power of Your Holy Word. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Lesson: Ezekiel 18:1–9, 25–32 (ESV)

¹ The word of the Lord came to me: ² "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?" ³ As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. ⁵ "If a man is righteous and does what is just and right— ⁶ if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity,

⁷ does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, ⁸ does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man, ⁹ walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord God.

²⁵ “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ²⁶ When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. ²⁷ Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. ²⁸ Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ³⁰ “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.”

Epistle Lesson: Philippians 2:1–18 (ESV)

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count

equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 21:23–32 (ESV)

²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴ Jesus answered them, “I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” And they discussed it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same.

And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

Benediction:

P: As you leave God's house today, do so knowing that you are remade and reformed through the blood of Christ and trusting that the Lord bless you and keep you, that the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, that the Lord look upon you with His favor, and give you His peace.

C: Amen.

Sola Gratia: “Grace Alone”

18th Sunday after Pentecost

Question of the Day: Why is grace so important? What does grace matter? Isn't it just some person's name? Why is it only by Grace that we can hope to be saved? Why can't I do enough to “Earn” my salvation? And then how do we apply that grace to our own lives? We live in such a vindictive and judgmental world today, why is it important that Christians be people of God's Grace?

Theme: The power of God's Grace in a world that lives by the law. How God's Grace frees us to become everything that He wants us to be. Grace Alone!

Theme verse: Ephesians 2:8-10

Hymn of the Day: Lift High The Cross.

As We Gather: As we gather today, think about... Quid Pro Quo, What Goes around Comes Around, Karma, You get what you deserve. These are all natural ways to thinking in our world aren't they? When someone wrongs you or me, we want retribution. We want justice. We want what is “right”. We may even want revenge. But Grace is not that way. In Grace, we receive, not God's punishment poured out on miserable sinners, but instead--His Mercy poured out on Christ Jesus, His Son. So as we gather today, think about ways in which you may be living with a Justice, Karma or revenge mindset, either for your relationship with God or in your relationship with others, and let God's Word instead show you the power of His Amazing Grace.

Creative Liturgical Elements *(note, because of the wide range of liturgical elements that churches use, this is not a complete list of all liturgical elements. Each church can include or exclude whichever of these elements as they see fit)*

Opening Litany and Invocation:

P: Lord God, You are our Mighty Fortress (Psalm 46:1)

C: Our Help in times of trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

P: Lord our God, You are our Refuge and our strength (Psalm 46:1)

C: You are the Rock of our salvation. (Psalm 62:2)

P: Lord our God, You are our deliverer, You fight for Your people. (Psalm 18:2)

C: The Battle is not ours, it is the Lord's. (2 Chron. 20:15)

P: Lord our God, You raise up the Lowly and the humble in spirit and you bring down the proud and the arrogant. (Matt. 23:12)

C: Humble yourself before the LORD and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Confession:

[\[Stand or kneel as your church custom permits\]](#)

P: This morning, as we humbly come before You Lord, knowing that we are not who we wish that we were, we are not who we would like to be and we cannot make ourselves such without You and Your glorious gift of Grace. So today Lord, Hear us as we pray.

C: Heavenly Father, we have tried and tried to please you. But we know that “All of us have been like one who is unclean and all of our good works are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) before you. We know that while we try to do good, we have “all fallen short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23)so we have no excuse. We have tried to do things our own way, but now we have to realize that we have sinned. So now we come to you, seeking only Your mercy and Grace, so we say; “Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy upon us.” Amen.

(Time of Silent confession and meditation)

Absolution:

P: The word in Isaiah chapter 1 (18) says that though our sins are like scarlet, He will make us whiter than snow. Though we have often turned our backs on God and have gone our own way, our God never leaves us or forsakes us (Deut. 31:6). And as a called and ordained servant of the Word, I have the privilege to announce God's Amazing Grace to you, that in the stead and by the Command

of our Lord, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son +
and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Psalm 51:

P: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;

C: according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

P: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know
my transgressions,

C: and my sin is ever before me.

P: Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,

C: so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

P: Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

**C: Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being and you teach me wisdom
in the secret heart.**

P: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

C: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

P: Let me hear joy and gladness;

C: let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

P: Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

C: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

P: Cast me not away from your presence,

C: and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

P: Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

C: and uphold me with a willing spirit.

P: Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

C: Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,

P: O God of my salvation, my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
C: **O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.**

P: For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
C: **you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.**

P: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
C: **a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

Collect:

P: The Lord be with you
C: **And also with you.**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Grace that You have bestowed upon us to make us right with You again. And today we ask that You would make us people of Your grace. People who embrace Your grace in every aspect of our lives. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 5:1–7 (ESV)

¹ Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? ⁵ And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. ⁶ I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. ⁷ For the vineyard of the

Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

The Epistle Lesson: Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

The Gospel Lesson: Luke 15:11–32 (ESV)

¹¹ And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” ’ ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they

began to celebrate. ²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’ ”

Benediction:

P: As you leave God’s house today, refreshed by His word, filled with His Spirit and reformed in His blood, go as His people of Grace, reflecting the image of Him who sends you out knowing that as you do...

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His peace. Amen.

Sola Fide: *“Faith Alone”*

19th Sunday after Pentecost

Question of the Day: What does faith look like in our world today? The way people talk about God, I sometimes wonder if faith is something that older people tend to be able to comprehend well, but something that young people don't have a sense or a grasp of. If I were preaching for this day I would try to tease out why faith is important. If you talk to young people today, they don't have any comprehension of trust any more. They don't trust the government (too many politicians seem to be willing to do anything to get their own way). They don't trust their parents (too many wedding vows have been broken over the years). They don't trust the police (We saw that in the recent “Black Lives Matter” campaigns). But who do they trust? Usually they trust their friends. Why? Because my friends have my back. My friends have never cheated me or back-stabbed me. My friends are always there for me. But the question is raised...but are they really? This is where we see that all man-made institutions and friendships we have can break down because they all sinfully and selfishly look to their own interests. But only Jesus is the faithful one who has never sinned, has never failed us and has never been betrayed, but instead allowed himself to be betrayed on our behalf.

Theme: Trust. Who do you trust? Trusting God. Trusting God in the small-stuff. Trusting God in the big-stuff. Why do we trust God? Because He has been a God who has always been faithful to His people. What is Saving Faith? Faith without works is dead...what does it mean to trust in the words of communion today; ""Given and shed 'for me'?"""

Theme Verse:

Hymn of the Day: My Faith Looks Up To Thee

As We Gather: As we gather today we hear people talk about the difficulty to have “faith” in a god whom they have never seen. But these same people often don't realize that we are daily putting our faith in things that we cannot see. We are often “trusting” in the unknown that we cannot control. For example, I have faith that because he has certain training and certification, I trust that my tax-guy is doing my taxes right and that i won't get audited. I have faith that when I get on an airplane, the people who built it did not forget any nuts or bolts, and I have faith that the pilot will get the plane back on the ground safely. .

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C: You are the Rock of our salvation. (Psalm 62:2)

P: Lord our God, You are our deliverer, You fight for Your people. (Psalm 18:2)

C: The Battle is not ours, it is the Lord's. (2 Chron. 20:15)

P: Lord our God, You raise up the Lowly and the humble in spirit and you bring down the proud and the arrogant. (Matt. 23:12)

C: Humble yourself before the LORD and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

[Stand or kneel as your church custom permits]

Confession:

P: Heavenly Father, we come before you knowing that we lack faith. Today we need you to forgive us our sins and grant us the faith to trust that You can truly move mountains as we follow you today.

C: Lord God, we know that our faith is not strong. Our prayers have been too small while our problems have seemed too big. We have not put our trust fully in You to provide each day with our daily bread, but instead we have chased after the wind in order to provide for our needs on our own. Lord, we have suffered from the sin of idolatry by setting ourselves up and making You bow down to us. But in the end we are the ones who need to humble ourselves and bow down before you. So today lord, humble us, let

us trust that you are God and we are not and let us have faith that can withstand all that Satan, the world and our sinful flesh may throw at us. So today we pray, Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us. Amen.

(Time of Silent confession and meditation)

Absolution:

P: Our God is a great and gracious God, He opposes the proud, but lifts up the humble, and when we put our faith where it belongs, not on ourselves, but in the Grace of God in the blood of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. And as a called and ordained servant of the Word, I announce to you that you have this marvelous promise of the forgiveness of sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Psalm 4:

P: Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

C: **You have given me relief when I was in distress.**

P: Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

C: **O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?**

P: How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah

C: **But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.**

P: Be angry, and do not sin;

C: **ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.**

P: Offer right sacrifices,

C: **and put your trust in the LORD.**

P: You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

C: In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Collect:

P: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you.

Heavenly Father, We live in a world in which we struggle to know exactly who it is that we can truly trust. Today, Lord strengthen us as we put our faith in You, the One who never fails us. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

The Epistle Lesson: Romans 3:21-31; 4:3-5, 17-25

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

...3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.

5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness

...18 In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." 23 But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25 who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

(Because there are too many good passages that can fit with this theme, I will let the preaching pastors choose between the following passages that they feel fit their preaching style the best)

Gospel Lesson Options:

John 6:22–59 (ESV)

²² On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²³ Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" ²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." ²⁸ Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." ³⁰ So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to

eat.’”³² Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”³⁴ They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”⁴¹ So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”⁴² They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Do not grumble among yourselves.⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—⁴⁶ not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.⁴⁸ I am the bread of life.⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”⁵² The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”⁵⁹ Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

John 11:17–27 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” ²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

John 20:24–31 (ESV)

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Matthew 17:14–21 (ESV)

¹⁴ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. ¹⁹ Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁰ He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

Benediction:

P: As you leave God’s house today, trust in the one who has your life in His hand and has promised never to leave or forsake you, and know that...

The Lord bless you and keep you

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you

The Lord look upon you with His favor, and give you His peace. Amen.

Sola Scriptura: *“Through Scripture Alone”*

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Question of the Day: Why is it so important to have one specific book that we use and cling to? Why not just go with what society thinks, what is “legal”, what is popular or what “feels right”? If we’re going to live our lives among other people, the question inevitably comes up, “What is right?” And “If it’s right for me, but not for you, then is it wrong?” Having one specific set of scriptures which we cling to is important because it keeps us grounded. Unfortunately, in today’s world, traditional, Biblical values are undermined and seen as unpopular by many in our society. So what does that mean for us? What does it mean for us as a church if holding to God’s word alienates us from our world? Should we change to fit the culture? Should we change so we can avoid having to close our church’s doors and keep people and money in the building? These are all questions that we as pastors have to face and wrestle with.

Theme: We stand firm on the Word of God. The Bible is our foundation for all that we believe, no matter what the world may think.

Scripture:

Hymn of the Day: Thy Strong Word

As We Gather: As we gather today, we hold to what many in our world today consider an untenable position. Many believe that because churches hold to the truths of God’s Word found in the scriptures that we are on the “Wrong side of history”. But nothing could be further from the truth. In the 1500’s Martin Luther was being challenged and condemned for his beliefs. But because his critics consistently contradicted one another, Luther found no comfort or fear in their answers. Instead, Luther put His faith and hope in the only One who doesn’t shift like sand. The Word of God. Today, there are so many voices clamoring saying; “Listen to me”, “this is right”, “things have changed.” But where will you ultimately put your hope? Lutherans are called to put their hope in the Word of God which never changes.

Creative Liturgical Elements *(note, because of the wide range of liturgical elements that churches use, this is not a complete list of all liturgical elements. Each church can include or exclude whichever of these elements as they see fit)*

Opening Litany and Invocation:

P: Lord God, You are our Mighty Fortress (Psalm 46:1)

C: Our Help in times of trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

P: Lord our God, You are our Refuge and our strength (Psalm 46:1)

C: You are the Rock of our salvation. (Psalm 62:2)

P: Lord our God, You are our deliverer, You fight for Your people. (Psalm 18:2)

C: The Battle is not ours, it is the Lord's. (2 Chron. 20:15)

P: Lord our God, You raise up the Lowly and the humble in spirit and you bring down the proud and the arrogant. (Matt. 23:12)

C: Humble yourself before the LORD and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

[Stand or kneel as your church custom permits]

Confession:

P: This morning, we come before the Lord our God who has not abandoned us, but who has spoken to the people of old through the prophets, and who in these last days has spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1). And we know that He speaks to us by the power of His Holy Spirit speaking through the apostles and the prophets in His Word.

C: Lord, today, make us people of the Word. Too often we have been callous and indifferent to the teaching and the preaching of Your Word. We have not daily sought You in the Scriptures nor diligently searched Your word. We have not always remembered the Sabbath day by keeping it Holy and have allowed other things to take the place of worship, devotion and Bible study in our lives. We have chosen to base our lives on popular books and self-help than in Your Word as our guide.

(Time of Silent confession and meditation)

Absolution:

P: God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and when the Lord uses it in our lives it not only guides us, but it corrects us when we have sinned. His word is more than a map, it is sharper than any two-edged sword-cutting out our sin and pointing us back to the blood of Christ which saves us. And as a called and ordained servant of Christ, I hereby forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Know that whoever hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is set free indeed. (John 8:31-36). Amen.

Psalm 1:

P: 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
C: **nor stands in the way of sinners, or sits in the seat of scoffers;**

P: but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

C: **He is like a tree planted by streams of water**

P: [it] yields its fruit in its season,

C: **and its leaf does not wither.**

P: In all that he does, he prospers.

C: **The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

P: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

C: **nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;**

P: for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,

C: **but the way of the wicked will perish.**

Collect:

P: The Lord be with you

C: **And also with you.**

Heavenly Father, we thank you that You are not a God who is silent, but rather that You have chosen to speak to and guide Your children throughout our lives. We pray today that we would all build our lives upon the foundation of the Rock of Your Holy Word, even when doing so may alienate us from our society. Strengthen us to be fitted for our fight of faith with the sword of Your spirit. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Lesson: Ezekiel 37:1–14 (ESV)

¹ The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” ⁴ Then he said to me, “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.” ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹ Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ ¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know

that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.”

Epistle Lesson: 2 Timothy 3 (ESV)

¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹ But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. ¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

(For the Gospel Lesson, I have three options that I feel are both very good and will let the preaching pastors choose which fits them at this time.)

Gospel Lesson:

Matthew 7:12–29 (ESV)

¹² “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. ¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. ¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. ²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ ²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” ²⁸ And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹ for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

John 6:60–71 (ESV)

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said

to them, “Do you take offense at this? ⁶² Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵ And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” ⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” ⁷¹ He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

John 8:31-36

The Truth Will Set You Free

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33 They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”

34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Benediction:

P: As you leave God’s house and enter a world of moral, cultural and social relativism which says that all things and all ways are right. May we be people of the Word, building our foundation upon the Rock and know that as you do...

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord look upon you with His favor.

And give you His peace. Amen.

Sola Christus: *Christ Alone!*

Reformation Sunday

Question of the Day: Aren't we past this whole Jesus thing? Hasn't modern science proven that we don't need Him anymore? Isn't belief in Jesus just Fantasy wish-fulfillment? Every religion has their own "miracle-worker" and great "teacher". What actually makes Jesus special? Some may question, I've prayed to Jesus when I was a kid, why is it that my parent's still got divorced, my dog still died, my grandma still got cancer and my girlfriend still dumped me? What good is Jesus today? What about the fact that i see so many Christians who act even worse than non-Christians? How can someone call themselves a Christian but live so different from how Jesus lives?

Theme: We are a church moving Forward into the future with the power of the Gospel of Christ! While we embrace our heritage and love our past, we cannot cling to anything but Jesus! Up to this point we have looked at all of the things that point us to christ, but Jesus is the fountainhead of them all. He is the ONE on whom our faith ultimately rests.

Scripture:

Hymn Of The Day: A Mighty Fortress

As We Gather: As we gather today on this Reformation Sunday we remember that on October 31st, 1517 a german monk named martin Luther posted 95 discussion points (also called his 95 thesis) on the door of the Castle Church in wittenberg Germany (this was similar to the town bulletin board). From then on, Luther's life took a dramatic turn. He became famous among many for his teachings and infamous among those who sought to discredit and even kill him. Luther's courage and bravery sparked what is called the protestant reformation and reminded the world that it is not martin Luther, Popes or churches, but Jesus Christ who saves us, through faith in His Grace as revealed to us in God's holy Scriptures. Amen.

Creative Liturgical Elements *(note, because of the wide range of liturgical elements that churches use, this is not a complete list of all liturgical elements. Each church can include or exclude whichever of these elements as they see fit)*

Opening Litany and Invocation:

P: Lord God, You are our Mighty Fortress (Psalm 46:1)

C: Our Help in times of trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

P: Lord our God, You are our Refuge and our strength (Psalm 46:1)

C: You are the Rock of our salvation. (Psalm 62:2)

P: Lord our God, You are our deliverer, You fight for Your people. (Psalm 18:2)

C: The Battle is not ours, it is the Lord's. (2 Chron. 20:15)

P: Lord our God, You raise up the Lowly and the humble in spirit and you bring down the proud and the arrogant. (Matt. 23:12)

C: Humble yourself before the LORD and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

[\[Stand or kneel as your church custom permits\]](#)

Confession:

P: O' Lord our God, you are a Mighty Fortress, set to withstand any wind rain, tyrant or army. Today Lord, we are assailed by, chased down and hunted by our enemy. Today, as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the reformation, we know that we are still sinners seeking God's mercy, grace and forgiveness. So in the name of Christ alone, we boldly come before the Lord, confessing our sins as we pray...

C: Lord, forgive us for our sins today. We know that too often, we have not put our faith and our trust in Christ alone. We have not looked to God's grace, but have sought to balance the scales and please God with our own works and prayers. Too often we have not built our lives upon the Rock of God's Word, but have instead conformed our faith to the models of this world. Rarely have we desired to spread Christ's kingdom, but have instead desired to continue doing what is comfortable for us. For all these today we humbly ask that you would forgive us Lord for not putting you first in our lives. Today we ask that you would renew, restore and reform us so that we can move forward. Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy upon us. Amen.

(Time of Silent confession and meditation)

Absolution:

P: The Bible tells us that there is no other name in Heaven or on Earth by which we can be saved. And it is Jesus who is the author and perfect or of our faith. Upon this your confession, and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I hereby forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Psalm 91

P: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

C: I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

P: For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.

C: He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge;

P: You will not fear the terror of the night,

C: nor the arrow that flies by day,

P: nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,

C: nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

P: A thousand may fall at your side,

C: ten thousand at your right hand,

P: but it will not come near you.

C: You will only look with your eyes

P: Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place— the Most High, who is my refuge.

C: no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.

P: For he will command his angels concerning you

C: to guard you in all your ways.

P: On their hands they will bear you up,

C: lest you strike your foot against a stone.

P: You will tread on the lion and the adder;

C: the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.

P: "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;

C: I will protect him, because he knows my name.

P: when he calls to me, I will answer him;

C: I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

P: With long life I will satisfy him

C: and show him my salvation."

Collect:

P: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that You are our mighty fortress, our strength in times of trouble. Lord today we ask that You would reform us through the power of Your Grace, through faith in the power of Your Word which speaks to us about the salvation that comes through the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

The First Lesson: Romans 5:1-10

Peace with God Through Faith

5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character,

and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The Second Lesson: Philippians 3:4–15 (ESV)

⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

The following two Gospel Readings could both work for this Sunday. I will leave it to the discretion of the preaching pastor for that day to choose.

The Gospel Lesson:

John 8:31–36 (ESV)

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ³³ They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?” ³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 14:1-7 (ESV)

¹ “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Benediction:

P: As you leave the safety and security of God’s House today, know that wherever you go, your God goes with you. He is and always will be your Mighty Fortress, your stronghold and your protector wherever you go. And because of Jesus we know that...

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you

The Lord look upon you with His favor,

And give you His peace.