

**COMMENTS/QUESTIONS ON THE LESSONS FOR OCTOBER 27, 2024
REFORMATION SUNDAY**

The Reformation reminds us that we must continue to ask about the core of our faith and how our church practices reflect that core. Luther is transformed by the knowledge that we are justified by God's grace alone. That realization came into conflict with the practice of indulgences rampant in the church of his day.

- **As we reflect on God's all-encompassing, all-inclusive grace and love, how does the church reflect that grace ... or not?**
- **How are we called to reform ourselves in light of God's grace?**

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- Though we typically hear the language of "new covenant" in the context of the coming of Jesus, Jeremiah uses this image in his historical context. As Judah faces an impending Exile, Jeremiah speaks of how God will use this exile to change their hearts and then restore the fortunes of Jerusalem. He does so by a series of pronouncements that begin "The days are surely coming, says the Lord," The promises move as follows:
 1. The scattering is meant to build up Israel and Judah.
 2. A new covenant will be written on their hearts.
 3. Jerusalem will be rebuilt.
- Keeping in mind that this set of promises is given to a people in exile, how do our experiences of "scattering" and despair shape us into a new relationship with God. Where have we had such experiences?

Psalm 46

- Psalm 46 is a psalm of comfort. In it, we are re-assured that the world may seem to be falling apart, but God is there. Where have you needed that word of comfort?
- This psalm stands in tension with the context of Jeremiah 31. Psalm 46 speaks of the city of God – Jerusalem – as not being moved because God is there. Meanwhile, Jeremiah 31 speaks of how that same city of God will be scattered though it will be rebuilt. The consistent theme is that no matter whether the city stands or falls, God remains with God's people.
- At the same time that the psalmist says to "regard ... what desolations God has brought upon the earth," he also says, "Be still, then, and know that I am God." How do you understand the tension between these two?

Romans 3:19-28

- Paul claims that there is ***no distinction***: we all fall short and sin, and we all are justified by God's grace. Why do we continue to draw distinctions, as if one person's sin is worse than another?
- A debated phrase both in this passage and throughout Paul's writings is translated here as "faith in Jesus Christ" (3:22, 26). Literally, we should translate the phrase as "the faith of Jesus." This can mean one of two things: 1. A faith that has Jesus as its object (thus, "faith in Jesus"); or 2. The faith that Jesus had. What would be the difference between the two possibilities? Consider especially verse 21:

²¹But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed,
... ²²the righteousness of God through **faith in Jesus Christ** for all who believe.

²¹But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed,
... ²²the righteousness of God through **the faith that Jesus Christ** had for all who believe.

John 8:31-36

- Why is Jesus' declaration of freedom so threatening to the Jewish believer? Note how this passage begins by saying that Jesus speaks "to the Jews who had believed in him." Do the Jews struggle with Jesus here because they feel superior to others? Or because they cannot accept that they are somehow enslaved?
 - Have you had an experience of when the truth has made you free? What does that phrase mean to you?
-

Jeremiah 31:27-40

27 **The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when** I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals.

²⁸And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD. ²⁹In those days they shall no longer say:

'The parents have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge.'

³⁰But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

31 **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.

³²It 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. ³³But 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. ³⁴No 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.

³⁵ Thus says the LORD,
who gives the sun for light by day
and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,
who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
the LORD of hosts is his name:

³⁶ If this fixed order were ever to cease
from my presence, says the LORD,
then also the offspring of Israel would cease
to be a nation before me for ever.

³⁷ Thus says the LORD:
If the heavens above can be measured,
and the foundations of the earth below can be explored,
then I will reject all the offspring of Israel
because of all they have done,
says the LORD.

38 **The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when** the city shall be rebuilt for the LORD from the tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

³⁹And the measuring line shall go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah. ⁴⁰The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Wadi Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate towards the east, shall be sacred to the LORD. It shall never again be uprooted or overthrown.