

Reformation Sunday

October 25, 2020

The Main Thing

John 8:31-36

God has been at work re-forming the cosmos – this cosmos, this world in which God loves with an eternal love. That is what God is up to.

Reformation.

God's work of reformation culminated when Jesus gave his life on the cross. For out of that death God began shaping a new life for the people of this world. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the great and sure sign of God's reformation of the world.

That work has touched each of us personally. In Baptism God began the work of re-forming you and me. It was then that God took hold of each of us and began to re-form us into the very image of Jesus Christ. God loves us far too much to leave us enslaved to the evils inherent in our human nature.

God loves us far too much to let us go down the path of self-destruction.

God wants to make new people out of us, people who delight in God's will, people who walk in God's ways.

That's why God has been doing the work of reformation in our lives, the work of re-forming us into God's special people. That work began in baptism and God is continuing to do that work in our lives even this very day.

There are times when we get off course. We forget about God. We turn away from God. We let all kinds of things get in the way of doing God's will.

I came across this old Pontius Puddle cartoon strip. Pontius was talking to a friend. "I admire those who served during the golden era of missions. Forsaking all, sojourning to far-off continents, braving insect-infected jungles, risking life and limb to spread the Word of God." Whereupon his friend said, "maybe we could go witness to the new neighbor down the street." "I dunno," replied Pontius, "it looks like rain." Isn't that just like you and me, letting all kinds of things get in the way of doing God's will!

So often we get side-tracked. That can happen in our personal lives. And it can happen in the church. At such times we need God to re-form us, to get us back on track again.

In the church, such things as tradition or rules or institutional self-interest have a way of getting us side-tracked and preventing us from living as God's new people. That has happened often in the history of the church. And when it does, God must re-form the church. Today we are remembering one such time of reformation in the 16th century. The people and even the leaders of the church had forgotten the main thing. Luther re-discovered the main thing and through his writings and preaching he told the church: The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

The church needed to be re-formed. And God did it. God's intent then was to form a people who were eager to do the will of God. That's God's intent now. That is always God's intent. God is in the business of reformation, of forming and re-forming people to be people who delight in God's will, people who walk in God's ways.

God is intent on doing reformation for one reason – the Gospel! That's the truth of which Jesus spoke in today's Scripture reading. "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." The truth of which Jesus spoke is the truth of God, the truth that God loves you and me, the truth that God loves the world that he sent his only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. This is the main thing. This is the gospel truth! The gospel is the main thing.

God is continually re-forming you and me, yes, God is continually reforming the church, so that we might be people who communicate this truth to others. For the sake of the Gospel God engages in the business of reformation.

Keep in mind that ministry is about the Gospel. Ministry is communicating the Gospel. Ministry is sharing the gospel. Ministry is living the Gospel. That is what we are about as Christians. That is what we are about as a congregation. That's what our church is all about.

God has been reforming us for this very purpose, so that we might be people

who do the will of God and the will of god is that the whole world might know the truth of God's love. You and I are part of that exciting ministry!!

This part of the sermon will not be very long. I say this portion because the major portion of the sermon will be preached by you as you leave this sanctuary this morning and witness to God's love in everything that you do this week and every week as you live out your faith in your family, at work, at play, wherever it is that you find yourself in God's wonderful world.

That is my Reformation sermon to you today. But it could also be my stewardship Sermon as we conclude stewardship month today in preparation for receiving your pledges today.

You say stewardship - what does this sermon have to do with stewardship? Stewardship is everything we do so that this congregation, so you and I can GO WITH THE GOSPEL, TO PROCLAIM GOD'S LOVE IN EVERYTHING WE DO AS A CONGREGATION. Stewardship is all about the gospel - sharing God's love with each other and throughout our community and the whole world. God is in the business of Re-forming us that we might know the truth and the truth will make us free. That truth is the Gospel and the Gospel is always the main thing.

Amen!