

Reformation Day

10-24-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Rooted in the past and growing into the future, the church must always be reformed in order to live out the love of Christ in an ever-changing world. We celebrate the good news of God’s grace, that Jesus Christ sets us free every day to do this life-transforming work. Trusting in the freedom given to us in baptism, we pray for the church, that Christians will unite more fully in worship and mission.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“O Word of God Incarnate”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 46

“God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. *Selah*
4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God will help her right early.
6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
7 The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*
8 Come, behold the works of the Lord,
how he has wrought desolations in the earth.
9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear,
he burns the chariots with fire!
10 “Be still, and know that I am God.
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth!”
11 The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

Hymn of Praise: “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

Prayer of the Day

“Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)

2nd Reading: [Romans 3:19-28](#)

Gospel: [John 8:31-36](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”](#)

The Message: (Video Link) <https://youtu.be/O7Ki-Ehf8bo>

Today we celebrate two special days, All Hallows Eve and Reformation Day. On the surface these two celebrations may seem miles apart but in reality there is an important link between them. The earliest of the two events has its roots in the Celts celebration of the harvest and Gaelic festival of Samhain. Both were at least partially or mainly grounded in paganism. In both instances the eve and day of November 1st signaled the changing of the seasons to the darker six months of the year. It was the recognition of winter weather beginning to emerge with its increasingly dark days.

November 1st was also considered to be that time of the year in which there was only a thin veil between the worlds of the living and the dead. The festivals began on sundown the eve of November 1st and sundown of that day. It was believed that the souls of the departed world were most likely to visit the world of the living at this time. People would even open the tombs during this time. The celebration included great feasts in which they would set an extra place for the returning souls. In addition to these practices the Celts would dress up in costumes of animal skins in order to disguise themselves against the roaming ghosts. With carved lanterns out of gourds they would go door to door reciting verses. You can see some of these observances, although altered, as a part of our Halloween celebration.

It is clearly evident that the celebration of the dead has had a long history. Even back to ancient times it was associated with the November 1st date when it was seen as the beginning of the darkest six months of the year and time of dormancy. Christianity was no exception in the need to recognize the dead, especially those who were martyred. Although they didn't follow the November 1st date, as early as the third century AD it had designated a date in May for this special day. It wasn't until the ninth century that it changed this observance to November 1st as being All Hallows Day or all Holy ones or All Saints Day, which began with the vigil the night before All Hallows Eve, Halloween. Like with Christmas, Christianity utilized an existing popular day of celebration in order to observe its own special holy day and vigil the night before,

Halloween. On this night people would dress up as a Saint and go door to door singing songs and reciting verses,

Christianity extended the observance to November 2 with All Souls Day in which the lives of all the devoted dead were observed not just the designated saints. With this day came the tradition of children going door to door asking for "Soul Cakes" which was like a biscuit. With time all such traditions surrounding All Saints day filtered into All Hallows Eve or Halloween.

This leads us to the fact that All Saints Day and the observances of All Hallows Eve became one of the major feast or holy days within the Christian calendar. This was most certainly true in the 16th century during the life of Martin Luther. Luther after years of struggling with the agony of not being able to find solace in his relationship with a God and church whose demands or laws were impossible to live, would find the answer. This answer was found in the scriptures specifically in Paul's words, "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law."

Of course this was a message opposite to what the church was teaching and proclaimed. They were living and proclaiming a life of good works and deeds as prescribed by the Papal leadership. It was through these edicts that the Church of Rome would control the people's lives with the threat of damnation. This not only controlled the people lives but also gave great power and wealth to the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy.

One of the corrupted forms of keeping their power and wealth was in the form of the sale of indulgences. These were Papal edicts which proclaimed entrance into heaven with their purchase. For Luther these were an act of works and had nothing to do with the true faith of an individual, Faith could not be bought and sold nor could eternal life be sold and bought.

Luther became so distraught over this practice that he decided to challenge the agents of the church to a debate over such papal authority and practices as the sale of indulgences. Therefore, he wrote his ninety-five thesis which presented his challenge to debate. One of the ways he chose to announce these items of debate was to post the thesis on the door of the church at Wittenberg which was attended by professors and theologians of the university there. It was a timely posting since it was All Saints Day eve, October 31st, All Hallows Eve - Halloween. In choosing this day he would take advantage of the most people seeing it since All Saints day was one of the most important and highly attended Christian feast days of the year.

But beyond Halloween and Reformation Day historically sharing the same day, there was another coincidental thing that happened. We must first be reminded that one of the important results of the reformation was the theology that in God's eyes everyone is important. There is no distinction. There is no hierarchical system which designates one's situation in life above the other. This is especially true within the Body of Christ as Paul wrote that we are all members of the Body of Christ, We are all equal in God's eyes regardless of our social status. Luther emphasized this in his doctrine of the priesthood of all, believers.

This doctrine hit at the core of the power found in the papacy and hierarchical structure of the church and the power of the Holy Roman Empire. This doctrine was a doctrine of equality. Making the scriptures available to everybody to read for themselves had led to the truth being understood by all. The truth was not determined by the edicts and pronouncement of the papacy and cardinals, bishops, and priests but could now be determined by everybody through the availability of reading the scriptures. With this doctrine the common person now had the power to determine the truth and their own destiny.

This doctrine would also have its effects on what it meant to be a saint. Sainthood as deemed by the church was in reality placing believers and members in the body of Christ with special status in God's eyes. They were the ones who were canonized by the papacy as having a particular special relationship with God. They were considered to be above everybody else. Therefore all Hallows day, had long ago departed from its original intent of being the time to observe the martyrs and all the believers who had gone before. It became a day to observe only those who had been canonized as being a saint.

With the doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers all believers were saints. In the Apostle Creed we state that "We believe in the Holy Catholic Church," (Universal Christian Church). This immediately follows with these defining words, "the communion of saints" or the fellowship of all believers.

With this change in meaning of sainthood came a change in the protestant ecclesiastical calendar. There was no longer a need for a second day of observance of the dead or those who were not canonized as saints. Everyone is a saint. Therefore the observance of "All Souls Day" became unnecessary. Of course within the Roman Catholic tradition it still remains as a special holy day of observance. With this change the tradition of "Souls Cakes" being given out to children found its new home on Halloween and would become the candy maker's delight in the Halloween tradition of "Trick or Treat."

In almost a round-about way Halloween not only has some of its roots in the Christian observance of All Saints day with its traditions of observances to the departed beginning with Hallows Eve but with the changes brought about by the Reformation. It is a rather rare occasion that we can observe Reformation Sunday and Halloween on the same day. Although the celebration of Halloween has taken on secular traditions, All Hallows Eve and All Saints Day are still the celebration of life which we share with all the saints throughout time. During this celebration we are reminded that in death there remains life which is eternal through God's love as revealed in Christ. In a very real way if this is what we believe then it is proper to take time to celebrate this good news as we remember and give thanks for those who have gone before. Therefore we not only celebrate life today but celebrate all those who have sought the truth and given themselves to proclaim it such as the reformers during the time of the Reformation.

Anthem: ["Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" The Bishop's Stortford College Choir](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Ever present God throughout all ages, we are in the midst of a time when there seems to be no stability for truth has been under attack by those who seek power. We are in need of someone to rise above the fray in order to bring to again recognize and promote truth and not fiction. Open the minds and eyes of people so that they will be able to change into living the reality of the dangers of denying truth. We need the wisdom, love, and courage to help bring the needed changes to our broken society.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, Kraig Greff, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"

Announcement

Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions force us indoors. Face masks and social distancing outdoors are not required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors.

*Offering to be sent to:
Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291