



Reformation Sunday
30 October 2022

Ascension Lutheran Church
Rev. Christian W. Marien

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

Last week my family harassed me into going to a corn maze at the pumpkin patch. Imagine my surprise when I found it would cost us \$40 to walk through the corn field. I am pretty sure that it is free right outside our back door but I digress. So, into the corn maze we went. My daughters decided to split up – each one taking a parent. Not to be outdone by my wife and older daughter, my younger daughter and I ran into a classmate and her family. After our greeting we asked them how many of the 10 stations they found. 4 they said. And then I offered them \$5.00 to help us get through the corn maze faster by sharing those clues with us. I know, I know...what am I teaching my youngest daughter? While I appreciate honestly and truthful dealings in the world – when it comes to the competition with my wife and middle child – all bets are off. And so, Hadley and I, with four clues already finished on our list, we set out to find the other six clues. After an hour, we had five more. 9 out of ten. And then a dead end. And another dead end. And just when we thought we found our way down a new path – we hit another dead end. Dead end after dead end after dead end after dead end. We ended up leaving the corn maze with nine of the ten clues. The time with my youngest child was priceless but the dead ends. I could not handle one more path that promised us a way forward only to be met with one more dead end.

If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. For a very long time those words held the fabric of our corner of the world together. The “truth” was the Bible. The words of Matthew 7 - “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” were the words that were heard on people’s lips, needlepointed on pillows, and reminded to children when they misbehaved. Most people also knew:

- You shall have no other gods. ...
- You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. ...
- Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ...
- Honor your father and your mother. ...
- You shall not murder. ...
- You shall not commit adultery. ...
- You shall not steal. ...
- You shall not give lie.
- You shall not covet your neighbor’s spouse
- You shall not covet your neighbor’s stuff.

For most people, these were the bedrock for the standard of truth and people lived their lives by this truth. And then the world changed – well the church changed. The church decided it could gain some new power and prestige by sometimes siding with things that Jesus spoke against. And as the Church was trying to figure out how to find its footing by returning to the path of following Jesus alone – the world decided to change the rules and the agreed upon “truth” was no longer agreed upon anymore.

It turns out we have never been very far from that first Reformation Day on October 31st, 1517 when Martin Luther (not Martin Luther King Jr.) set forth a new version of the truth for the world to be renewed. Abuses of the all-powerful state church against the people were finally challenged by a lowly German monk. And the world began to turn for the better. The Word of God was made available for everyone. And believe it or not, people began to read the Bible. The Bible was the only book printed in their own language. What else did they have to do? No Netflix. No social media. No youth sports to watch. Just work and family and church. And the world today, has forgotten, the freedom they now enjoy is due to that lowly German monk who challenged the man-made rules of a church by returning the worship of God and the practice of faith to the



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actual teaching of the Bible. Otherwise, we would all be worshipping one way and none of us would know of the grace of God.

Which brings us to today.

It turns out that the word “truth” has lost its power once again because the world has changed the rules once again. I remember a time when we would expect news to simply be news – no opinion or bias attached...no angle or agenda...just the events of the day reported. We would read newspapers and believe the article was written without bias or agenda. Most of us would believe that has changed. And certainly there are some among us who believe very little that is reported on a major television network-perhaps rightly so? What are we to do? Well, what many have done is to find a new source of news that fits their beliefs and ideas about the world. And once we find such a source, we listen to only that source. Author Anne Lamott writes, “you can safely assume you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”

We forget what Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” Which means I have to spend more time in the source of truth and less time with the news source that tells me the truth I want to hear to reinforce what I already believe. Which leads me to these words of Scripture...

- In 1 John, Chapter 1: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
- And in John, Chapter 6: Jesus answered, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.
- John, Chapter 8: you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

And if all of that is too one sided (although it is Jesus sided people) we hear Jesus speaking to Pilate (a man full of worldly power at the time) and as Pilate has the power to kill or free Jesus, our Savior speaks these words: “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” And as Jesus speaks with the authority of the author of truth, Pilate asks Jesus this question, “what is truth?” It seems that our world today is not as lost as we might think. Even in the time of Jesus – there was a question as to the nature of the truth. The challenge for me is that the truth of Jesus has not changed – though I wonder if our willingness to loosen our grasp on that truth has made our lives easier or more difficult.

It turns out that the corn maze taught me more than I thought it did. Cheating to get the first four clues was an efficient time saver, if not a little dishonest. Working hard for an hour to find 5 more clues was rewarding and satisfying. Getting more and more frustrated at searching for the 10th clue reminded me why I hate not being able to see the big picture of the maze or in life. Hitting a dead end and then another and then another reminded me that sometimes you should not trust what people say or the direction they tell you that you should go. Remembering that the entrance of the maze and the exit of the maze being the same were already laid out for us allowed my daughter and I to know we would eventually find our way out of the maze. Realizing that there was an oak tree on a hill near the entrance of the maze confirmed my belief that if we kept our eyes on the hill we would never truly be lost in the maze.

Dear friends, the same is true in this life. Keeping our eyes on the cross on a hill will anchor us completely to the truth. It is an act of faith to carry that truth into the world. People of God, Go. Be. Free. Amen.