

The Festival of the Reformation (2020)

Holy Spirit, Light Divine: Shine upon this heart of mine;
 Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day;
 Let me see my Savior's face; let me all His beauties trace;
 Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee.
 Amen.

John 8:31–36 *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* 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’?”

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

In the Name of Jesus.

HIS Word, dear children of our heavenly Father, is the Gospel! The Glad Tidings that the Threat, the Power—whatever our fellow slaves of sin hit at and miss with their religions and politics and economics and amusements—in a word, ‘God,’—He has never been distracted by what WE would make of HIM! He is UTTERLY untethered by OUR chains!

And a man named John came to give us the word of MOSES, one more time—but then...and, then he faithfully decreased as the other Word increased: behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!

The Living God, the Free God, Untethered God then sent Doctor Martin Luther as one final voice, like John, to the world, to the church, to the disciples of the Word. For one thing and one thing alone: freedom.

In between John and Luther came Jesus Christ. Hooray! Jesus had the same message as John before Him and Luther after Him! And that message is gladness alone:

Your Maker and Father, your Holy Spirit—He does not intend to be rude; but when you wake, when you toddle, when you lie down, when you die—He is un-swayed in HIS will by what YOU estimate about YOU!

Or—Hallelujah!—what you and I estimate about the next man, all men: even the Man named Jesus!

Today's Gospel reading is as clear as our Holy Spirit can be: that you can be 'all for' Jesus and even THAT does not distract Who's Who in heaven from the cry, 'It is finished!', to words that can for certain be reported but—oh!—WHEN will they be the ONLY Word we hear?

'Go! Tell my brothers: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God.'

‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, then that’s what’s what.’

‘Blessed are those who have not seen and yet are disciples, yet have the Word, despite ALL distractions!’

Not a bad way to define the sin of the world the Lamb of God takes away: ‘distraction.’ Most days you and I, dear ones, do well to consider what BESIDES Jesus’ God and Father WE make ‘what’s what’ in our lives: lusts, schemes, INFLUENCE...ughh.

And, not a bad way to define the Reformation of the Church! ‘The God we fear by instinct does NOT think of the baptized as slaves of sin. The Father of Christ has ONE GOAL: to glorify His Son, by His Son not casting away those the Father gives Him! The Holy Spirit is now revealed as the Holy Abused One! For He raises even a sorry sight like me to make you pardoned for certain, all the way down to your feet. And He does this as long as this poor pastor has breath.’

H...E...A...R... Your Holy Spirit!

A...N....Y..... OTHER WORD IS A DISTRACTION!

OK; there’s really only one other Word, other than God’s Word to us, Jesus Christ. And that is Moses, the Law, or some sorry, angry faced ape-ing of Moses: ‘Why are YOU not as upset

as I am by what is going on in this world?! Need I report to you again?!

I beg you not to. I plead with you rumble around the playroom of the Gospel, splash around the fun bath of the Gospel, lay your heads down in good cheer and go to sleep at once because of the Gospel!

You have believed in Jesus, dear children. Even I have! He is arisen! Glorious Word!

And so did the Jews that Jesus addressed with two big 'Ifs,' two happy, happy 'Ifs!'

If you remain in MY Word, as opposed to Moses. As long as you are not distracted by the sad attempt by the next slave of sin to say HIS chains hang more lightly on HIM as opposed to another man-----you! Then you are free and then you know the Gospel and all will know that the Father gave YOU to ME to learn from ME!

If I, the Son, set you Free—and I do! Listen to your poor pastor!—then the Only One Whose judgment matters doesn't give HOOT what A...N...Y man says about YOU, other than the Man Who fulfilled the Father's Word and cried out—for YOUR sake—It is accomplished! Accounts paid up and closed! It is finished!

Now, dear children of God, go ahead and play-act the Law all you want! As dear children benefit from their loving parents'

discipline and correction and consistency—because the slave is there until He comes again—

So the next man, the world, even YOU may benefit from YOU learning to make YOU behave better.

I've been watching a little one learning to pray. You know: if the prayer teacher closes his eyes during the meal prayer, you can quietly slide your fingers into the lunch plate and find treasure! OK. Praying work and love could use some improvement in us all. Who has YET learned to pray for no purpose at all, with no hidden agenda?

And who has learned the Gospel Luther teaches the Church in the meanings to the Article of our Baptismal Creed:

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

We can always learn THIS more and more:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

And THIS can NEVER be learnt to oblivion; in fact, THIS is the WORD to which Jesus calls His disciples, through ALL distractions and Laws and bullies and scolds:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

Got all that down, without fail, my friends? No?! No matter!

My obsessive-compulsive Holy Spirit never wears out teaching His disciples. He is never distracted by what WE bring to HIM; and He bids you—again—today, to ignore the distractions of the Law and the bullies and the scolds inside and out! Eat and drink Christ's Body and Blood! YOU! Hear and learn and rejoice in your God and Father in the Name of Jesus.