Reformation Sunday (Observed)
John 8:31-36 (Series A)
God's Word Alone (Sola Scriptura)

Watching campaign ads is no way to find out the truth, other than one candidate thinks he or she is the best candidate. And yet the "truth" is only their opinion or the opinion of someone else.

In the Gospel of John we are told, "you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" Pilate seemingly saw the world with uncertainty as to the truth, perhaps perceiving that many people are working the angles for their own gain, making truth hard to come upon. Jesus actually gave the answer to those who believed in him, as found in John 8:31-32, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

But, is the word of Jesus trustworthy? Well, just a little earlier in John, chapter 8, he spoke of being one with the Father, even using "I Am" the name for God. The believing Jews didn't question the word of God, so Jesus was saying that his words could be trusted as well. A well-respected man commonly had a son who carried great respect as well. One need look no further than Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests. Both were respected, and yet Caiaphas was only the son-in-law of Annas.

Now, some may question the existence of God, a thought that didn't occur back then because the only question was how many gods were there, not if there was a god. So how does Jesus show that he is God and therefore worthy to be praised and followed? Well, if miracles weren't evidence enough then his resurrection from the dead should confirm it, for such a thing had never happened before nor has it happened since. Jesus' teachings matched with the Father's words, confirming, clarifying or fulfilling them.

Herein lies that basis for the Lutheran teaching of *Sola Scriptura,* Scripture alone. At Martin Luther's time, Pope Leo X (today it is Leo XIV) occupied the highest office on the Roman Catholic church. He considered that he carried the authority of God and that his decrees were equally valid and authoritative. When he certified the sale of indulgences for the remittance of temporal punishment for sins and expedited passage through purgatory, not only for self but for loved ones, Luther was not a happy priest. This gave people a false sense of security because a payment could make satisfaction without turning from sin or having remorse for what had been done.

The purchase of indulgences went against the word of God, wherein forgiveness is a free gift of God, making the sale of it a heresy. The Pope had overstepped his authority since in fact all authority belongs to God. Man may not supersede the authority of God, not to build a church as in the case of St. Peters in Rome, or for any other reason. A current practice is to claim wisdom and authority so as to give approval to the lifestyles of people. God has spoken on all matters that apply to man and to say he has not, because these are modern times, is to say God is not the same yesterday and today and into the future. The word of God remains true and man's word cannot overrule what God has set forth.

Popes and others have preached good works or prohibitions for different purposes than God intended. Good works as a demonstration of faith but not a means to gain entrance into heaven. This is why the Lutheran church also that is by faith alone in the saving work of Jesus Christ and that by the grace of God alone are we granted forgiveness and salvation.

And so we have hold to Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura), Faith alone (Sola Fide) and Grace alone (Sola Gratia). In this then we then worship Christ alone (Sola Christe) as the only mediator between us and God; meaning salvation by no other means. And we give glory to God alone (Soli Deo Gloria), the one who created, sustains us, and saves us through his Son.

In the Word it began and continues, true and eternal, always directing us in the way we should go. Thanks be to God that he showed us the truth through Christ. Amen.