

## Thoughts on the Readings of Reformation Sunday, October 31, 2021

**The Common Thread** The gospel is everlasting. It is not new or different with changing politics or cultures. That good news from God is a word of both judgment and grace. There cannot be one without the other. This is precisely what culture always wants to change. Be still; stop kicking against the goads, and know that the Lord is God—not you, not culture, not government. Scripture insists that all have sinned and therefore, failed to attain to the glory of God. Yet, God has been and will continue to be a help in this time of trouble. He is the justifier of the one who has faith in his Son. So, hear the judgment, the corrective of the law, then continue to believe in the Just Justifier who has set you free from sin.

**First Reading - [Revelation 14:6–7](#)** The Small Catechism exhorts us to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” Since the day of judgment is coming, it will serve us well to learn this lesson now, so that our fear, love, and trust brings him glory not only on that great and glorious day but also in these earthly days. In the meanwhile, may we be his messengers who fly about the globe, proclaiming the eternal gospel of salvation.

**Psalm - [Psalm 46:1-11](#)** We are still faced with troubles in the process to reform the Church. Things that were once considered true because they are the testimony of Scripture, are now cast aside in favor of personal and public opinion. The troubles that once came from outside adversaries have now come home to us. We must now reform ourselves. Never before has the old adage been truer than it is now in Lutheran churches: *Semper Reformanda*. In our efforts to keep reforming, God remains “a very present help in trouble.” “The Lord of hosts is with us”; he will prevail.

**Second Reading - [Romans 3:19-28](#)** Luther said that he saw Christ in every verse of the Old Testament. The law and the prophets do indeed bear witness to the righteousness of God. Yet this righteousness has been demonstrated apart from the law through faith in Jesus Christ. Although everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, everyone who believes in Christ is vindicated through the grace of God. This saving faith is a gift from God and does not depend upon works of the law.

Only God is just to forgive sins, as some of the teachers of the law noted when Jesus forgave the sins of the paralyzed man who had been lowered through a roof by his friends ([Mark 2:7](#)). And only God is the justifier of sinners. This righteousness of God that makes him “just and justifier” is only had—or as Melancthon liked to say, “apprehended”—through faith in Jesus Christ. The righteousness that justifies sinners with God will not come through works of the law, religious ceremonies, or even devotion to God. It only comes through faith in Christ, and to the one who believes in God who justifies sinners. That person's faith will be counted to him as the very righteousness of God in Jesus Christ ([Rom 4:5](#)).

**Gospel - [John 8:31-36](#)** What does it mean to be a disciple? Jesus says that his disciples are those who abide in his word. We have no clearer picture of what such abiding means than those first disciples of his who wanted to live with him, following him everywhere so that they could hear his word. Being a disciple means the same thing today: people who want to live with Jesus, abiding in his word, following him all day long in that word. Traditions do not free us from sin and death. The Son does that through a knowledge of the truth found in his word. This is the clarion call of the Reformation: *Sola Scriptura!*