

Si vos manseritis in sermone meo, vere discipuli mei eritis, et cognoscetis veritatem, et veritas liberabit vos. What you would've heard sitting in church 500 years ago, and hundreds of years before that. Scripture read in Latin. You today understood as much as the people then. Maybe a couple know Latin, some can pick out words, *discipuli*, disciples, *veritas*, truth. But the meaning, the truth, what Jesus actually says, no.

1517, on All Saints Day eve, All Hollows Eve, who misses church on All Saints Day? Dr. Luther posted 95 statements on the church door for theological debate, a spark that starts it all, he starts: "Out of love and concern for truth." Then 1521, this lowly, single monk stands before the leader of the world, against the church of the world, will not recant his writings, teachings which cite Scripture and Church Fathers, no new teachings, holding to catholic truth, says, "Here I stand." He's excommunicated which is a death sentence that any good Christian could carry out. Luther's German Prince, stages a kidnapping, Luther is held up at Wartburg Castle where he translates Scripture into German. Two laymen in Wittenberg, Lucas Cranach the Elder and Christian Doering, get this and 1000's of Bibles start rolling off the press. History is changed. A key significance that these Lutheran won't surrender their Bibles, sadly because Rome won't remain catholic, there will soon be 2 churches in the world, Rome and us. So it is this coming Christmas, 500 years ago, people gather in Wittenberg and for the first time in 300 years, they receive the Lord's Supper in both bread and wine, and this Christmas Service held, for the first time in 1000 years in the language of the people.

Scripture always matter, that Lutherans would rather die than give up their Bible, even choose to die rather yield God's truth. Many did. Of the key points of the Reformation, Scripture Alone for all doctrine and teaching. Who else dare confess this even now? That is the catholic faith, Scripture alone, since Adam, since Jesus' time, since Luther, still today.

The first line of the sermon you heard in Latin. **If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, you will know the truth, the truth will set you free.** But how can you abide in Jesus' word if you cannot understand it? People knew only what they're being told, but what they were being told wasn't always the truth. Medieval errors like: being told to buy indulgences; pay to view relics; being told to make satisfactions, penance, work the priest gives you do and by doing these things, and others, that sets you free. Free from their sins. Free from purgatory. Dear Lord.

Is our world any better? We are surrounded by people living their own individualist truth, they think they're free, they've life, but it's an illusion.

You will know the truth, the truth shall make you free. Truth is powerful. It liberates you from slavery of sin and death. It releases you from ignorance of unbelief. It protects you from the traps, the schemes of the devil, the father of lies. However, truth is also dangerous. For since it is so powerful, evil cannot tolerate it. Wherever the truth is spoken, evil is right there to attack it. Just confess God's

truth of creation of life from the womb, male and female, marriage, the body, the only way of eternal life -you're attacked as being hateful or unloving or bigoted, intolerant, and make it seem the truth-teller is the problem of this world. The author George Orwell remarked, "In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act." Truth is powerful; always warfare against it in the fallen world.

Abide in My Word, know the truth. Word and truth are not just ideas and words but a Person who literally unites His word, His truth, His freedom to you in treasures of the Sacraments. All about freedom, what's yours in Christ! **If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!** How we get freedom? The answer so simple, obvious to heirs of the Reformation. From Sunday School, Confirmation Class, we all know the best answer to just about any important question is: "Jesus!" or you can probably say Baptism, the same point.

Before 1517, then, now, the beating heart of the Gospel that gives life to the Church; about how to know your sins are forgiven. **You shall be free indeed.** Christ alone. This wasn't a freedom from everything –not from ceremonies or good works that glorify God -but the freedom to receive with joy the preaching of the Gospel, true Word and Sacraments. We honor the ritual that gives form to this faith going on for 1000s of years; that edifies, points to Christ, nothing else so filled with Scripture and to do the good works that flow from faith given.

Dear heirs of the Reformation, know 2 things well. You, I are unworthy, condemned people, who falls so far short of His glory. St. Paul: **We know that whatever the law says it speaks to those under the law (you) so that every mouth may be stopped-** silent, shut your mouth- **the whole world accountable to God.** Dare not claim you aren't as bad as him or her. You cannot justify yourself. You are that bad. How dare you think God should give you some credit, some righteousness because you've done some good things, you're usually nice, you clean-up well, usually don't say bad things about others, and trying to be good should count. Silent! Every mouth stopped! One thing the law, Scripture says of you: guilty! You haven't come close.

Next, the entire life of the Christian is to be one of repentance. You are free in Christ, forgiven, righteous, holy, free from bondage of sin, even death has no hold of you, you serve and act and forgive others and live according to unchanging truth, His Word. **You are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.** True life, true freedom, truth of Christ alone.

Today, we thank God for the Reformers, for Luther; that so many mothers and fathers struggled, sacrificed, even gave their lives so you could sit there, call yourself Lutheran. We celebrate in a spirit of grateful humility, repentance, that God still allows His good news of forgiveness to be preached; we ask that He would preserve His true catholic, apostolic, Christian Church, that many more might hear pure doctrine, truth, that God forgives sinners all by grace through faith in Jesus. Believe this Gospel, abiding in Christ to the end. Out of love and concern for truth. Don't stop confessing His truth. Do not be moved. Stand firm. God help you that you do no other. Rejoice dear child of the Reformation, you are free in the Son. Bask in His grace.