

Reformation Sunday + Year C

October 30, 2022

Rooted in the past and growing into the future, the church must always be reformed in order to live out the love of Christ in an ever-changing world. We celebrate the good news of God's grace, that Jesus Christ sets us free every day to do this life-transforming work. Trusting in the freedom given to us in baptism, we pray for the church, that Christians will unite more fully in worship and mission.

The Gospel

- Two possible “thesis statements” for John’s Gospel as a whole:
 - (1) Through Christ’s death, all humanity is connected to God. God identifies with our most egregious human suffering and is with us in it. John 12:32, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth [i.e., crucifixion], will draw all people to myself.”
 - (2) “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (As part of the Good Shepherd dialogue). Abundant life perhaps looks like bread, light, a door to God, care from a shepherd, resurrection, connection with one another, with the divine. (“I am the bread of life...I am the light of the world...I am the gate...I am the good shepherd...I am the resurrection and the life... I am the vine”)
 - Reminder: John’s Gospel is likely the latest written and takes the most “liberties” with the way the Jesus story is told, as compared to the synoptic Gospels. It is thought John was written more metaphorically in order to reveal deep truths about God, humanity, and struggling through the brokenness of human community. Some of John’s seemingly conditional statements of faith (and demonization of Jews as a whole) are balanced by other wide-sweeping imageries of divine faithfulness and love for the whole world.
- How does today’s text connect with these potential Johannine theses?
- After the Exodus, the national identity of God’s people was often centered on freedom from all forms of slavery.
 - How does John reframe slavery and freedom from it in today’s text?
 - What slaveries do we tend to forget?
 - How does Jesus “make us free”? (John 3:16, John 12:32)
 - What does this say about God?
- This part of the lectionary cycle is sometimes referred to as “the half-year of the Church”. We are still focusing on the steady-growing life of the Church. In what ways does today’s text remind us of our life together as Christ’s church?

Jeremiah

- Jeremiah was a Southern Kingdom prophet and was thought to be alive during the Babylonian exilic period starting around 586 BCE. The biblical book Jeremiah has come to us in two forms that have some similarities and some major differences, which reminds us that works of Scripture often circulated in varying communities and sometimes took on different forms (and interpretations/translations) based on those contexts. One example of this is that the earlier form of the book proclaimed a series of laments that stood on their own. Later, the editors added judgments in response to the laments. Why would an editor want to do that?
- Chapters 30 and 31 were thought to be an insertion of the hope of the nation's conversion/turning/repentance into a pretty hopeless section of the book. What might it mean that the nation still goes through exile, even with this hope of conversion/turning/repentance?
- What are the relational implications of a God who proclaims this sort of hopeful new beginnings?
- What might it mean that God forgets?
- Why would this scripture be proclaimed on this festival day?

Psalm

- How does this psalm strike you — how does the tone work with (or against) it? How does the refrain focus us?
- What sort of life experiences might lead to writing a song such as this one?
- Why do you think this song is offered in response to the reading from Jeremiah?
- Why would this scripture be proclaimed on this festival day?

Romans

- The book of Romans is the Apostle Paul's grand take on God's divine action in Jesus, especially here noting the freedom Jesus brings in the midst of the conviction of the law. The repeated phrase "faith IN Jesus", which seems to indicate *our* action of "having faith" stands in contrast to an alternate translation: "the faithfulness OF Jesus", which reveals Jesus as the one who gathers us into God's faithfulness. Why might that be an important distinction to make here?
- The word "atonement" here refers to the death of a martyr that turns God's disposition toward the people as it frees them from an enslaving power.
- "Believe" can also be translated "Trust." How does this shift in language change the relational implications of the these verses?
- What commonalities does this passage share with the Jeremiah text?
- How expansive are these proclamations?
- Why would this scripture be proclaimed on this festival day?

Final Questions

- Reflect on the lyrics of the Hymn of the Day and how it brings forth themes from the scriptures of this season.
- Which part of the ordo (Gathering/Word/Meal/Sending) do these texts most deeply connect to? Why?
- What's the Good News?