Sermon from
October 25, 2026
Pentecost 22
Pastor Amy Vigesaa

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Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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Today is Reformation Sunday- a day when Lutherans remember the work of Martin Luther and others who helped reform the Church in the early 1500s. It is a day we remember the Church is always reforming and always in need of renewal. Martin Luther, a monk in the Catholic Church, discovered a truth in scripture that had been hidden to him. In reading the book of Romans, Luther's eyes and heart were opened to understand clearly the gift of the gospel. See, Luther wrestled with the brokenness that separated him from God and other people. The bible calls this sin. There are things we know we should do that we don't, there are things we know we shouldn't do that we do, and there is an environment around us that feeds and reinforces the brokenness that exists within us and in the world. There is sin done to us and sin we do to others. Martin Luther was preoccupied by the reality of his own sinfulness and constantly felt the need to confess. He was never good enough, always failing in the piety of the Church and his own expectations of life in Christ. He knew he needed God, that wasn't the issue. His understanding of God though was incomplete until he read that God's grace was a free gift; that while we were still

sinners Christ died for us; that we are made right with God through Jesus' work on the cross and not by our own efforts. God's grace is not based on merit, but on our need. Luther was familiar with sin- he knew he was a sinner. He felt that, lived that, knew that in his bones. The extent of God's grace, however, seemed to be a new learning.

My guess is that unlike Luther, most of us struggle to name our sin. That unlike Luther, we have an easier time naming the sins of others than naming our own. We look around at the world and point to all the wrongs committed by leaders and nations, by political parties and authorities- and there are a lot. We look at our neighbors and say that one's a drunk, and that one's mean, and that one can't seem to get their act together. But until we come to terms with our own sinfulness, we will never fully understand our need for God. In confirmation and in our Tuesday Bible Study, we have discussed that one of the purposes of God's law is to show us our sin and in doing so, it shows us our need as well.

Public Theologian Debie Thomas tells about a conversation with her son after he asked her the question, "'What does being a Christian give me that being a "good person" does not?'" After much thought and many responses, Thomas finally landed on the truth: 'It gives me my sinfulness. As ironic as it may sound, Christianity liberates me with a truth that cuts before it heals: the truth that Sin is a deadly, destructive force against which I am helpless and powerless — apart from the death and resurrection of Jesus. Christianity gives me the robust and unflinching language I need to confess what St. Paul so honestly articulates in

his letter to the Romans: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

When we’re able to recognize sin and its ability to deform us at the core of our being, we’re then also able to identify our need for God and the power of grace to reform us as the people of God. Without that recognition, we continue through life oblivious to our need for a Savior. If sin isn’t real; if sin isn’t something that has power in our lives, then that must mean all our relationships are loving and healthy, and our inner voice is surely honest and trustworthy. We’re perfect and God is unnecessary. To get a clear picture of our sin, all we have to do is think of the person we love the least. Maybe it’s someone in your past, maybe it’s a co-worker, a boss, a neighbor, a kid at school, a politician. Maybe it’s yourself. If Love of God and love of our neighbor, are the two greatest commandments we are given from scripture- then our sin shows up when and where we are most unable to love. The truth is we don’t like to admit that there is something broken inside us. We don’t like to admit that we sin. But we do, and that’s the truth. “The truth will set you free, but first it will make you feel miserable.” Gloria Steinem said.

Sin can lock us up in the fear of being exposed, or life falling apart, or losing relationships, or losing ourselves. We can get stuck, caught in the mud and muck of lies and half-truths. Those lies leave us misshapen and deformed. The remedy Jesus offers us is a freedom that comes through him.

"If you continue in my words, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." We have words from Jesus- teachings in scripture like the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes where we are told to be salt and light for the world; to love our enemies and pray for those who hurt us; to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice; to turn the other cheek, give the shirt off our backs, and go the extra mile; where we are commanded to be peacemakers and healers and forgivers; to love God and love our neighbor. Those are the teachings, the words we are to live in, dwell in and live out. But honestly, no matter how hard I try, I can't seem to do all that perfectly. Thank God, Jesus isn't only a teacher, he's a Savior. And that's the truth too.

Pastor and theologian David Lose says, "The truth of the Son, the truth that makes you free, the truth at the heart of the 95 theses which Luther nailed to the door at the Wittenburg church, the truth of the Reformation that we remember and celebrate this Sunday, is that we are sinners – God's fallen, at time flailing, regularly confused, and always imperfect children – from birth to death. Sinners that no amount of good works or good intentions or status updates or [likes on social media] can redeem. But – and here is the (second) truth which finally sounds like good news – we are also those sinners who are simultaneously God's beloved children, those sinners who God calls blessed and holy and perfect, those sinners for whom Christ died, those sinners whose futures are not determined by their regrets and mistakes but by the possibility created by resurrection, those sinners whom God loves above all else. We are not perfect…and we don't have to be in order to be loved. But it's hard to trust

that we're really loved – let alone the experience of freedom that comes from knowing you are loved and accepted – if we're not honest first." David Lose

Yesterday, my youngest son, Finn, was confirmed. He stood up in front of the congregation with the other students and confessed his faith and said these words in response to affirming his baptism: I do and I ask God to help and guide me. In a way, those words acknowledge our need again. Faith is not something we do on our own. On our way to the church, my husband started asking Finn some questions about truth. Nice, light conversation for the drive. See, Hans had to preach today on this text too, so he was fishing for some thoughtful comments from our son. It turned out Finn had quite a few thoughtful comments on the subject. One thing that came out in our conversation is that believing in a truth often requires trust. For example, in attending school, Finn needs to trust his teachers to teach him accurate information, correct methods for solving equations, and a full understanding of history from various perspectives and people groups. In faith, we also are asked to trust. We trust our teacher. We trust Jesus- not only that he gives us good teaching and good words to dwell in, we trust the truth he offers us about God, ourselves, and the world. Ultimately, we trust Jesus to be our truth.

In another section of the gospel of John, Jesus says these words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus is the truth we have been given- a truth that reveals who God is, who we are, and who we are to God. Jesus is the truth of

God's love for the world. Jesus is the truth of God's grace and forgiveness. Jesus is the truth of God's promise- that God will never leave us or forsake us.

First truth- we are sinners. Sin deforms us. We need God.

Second truth- we are beloved children of God, forgiven and set free through the work of Jesus Christ. Grace reforms us.

Ultimate truth- Jesus is the truth of who God is and who we are to God.

"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." As we live in honest relationship with Jesus, abiding in his word of grace, our lives will be transformed and the church is reformed as we experience the truth and freedom that only comes from him.

Amen