

St Mark's Lutheran Church Caloundra

Together @ St Marks

25 October 2020 Reformation Sunday
Church @ Home



As you prepare

Set up a small cross and candle in your home worship space. Reformation is one of the key church festivals. Red is the colour we use to help us celebrate the church festivals. Decorate your home altar space with something red.

We begin

Jesus said: 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'

**In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
Amen.**

Opening Song We Sing [LHS 822 God has spoken by his prophets](#)
Or [This is amazing grace](#)

822LH God has spoken by his prophets

God has spoken by his prophets,
spoken his unchanging Word,
each, from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
Mid the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holds us fast:
God is king, his throne eternal,
God the first, and God the last.

God has spoken by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time began,

Light from light, to earth
descending,
Man, revealing God to man.

God is speaking by his Spirit,
speaking to the hearts of men,
in the age-long Word expounding,
God's own message, now as then,
through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith yet standing fast;
God still speaks, his Word
unchanging,
God the first, and God the last.

George Wallace Briggs 1875-1959, alt.
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Psalm 46

Read the Psalm.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with
its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city, it shall not be moved,
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in uproar, the kingdoms totter,
He utters his voice, the earth melts.

Come, behold the works of the Lord,
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth:
He breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with
fire.

‘Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth’.
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Bible Readings

Open your Bible and read

Jeremiah 31:31-34 The Lord will write his law on our hearts

After the reading

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Open your Bible and read:

Romans 3:19-28 Justification by faith

After the reading

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Confession

Knowing that all of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God, let us draw near to God our Father with a true heart to confess our sins, and ask him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

Almighty God, our maker and redeemer, we confess to you that by nature we are sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against you by thought, word, and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to your infinite mercy and plead for your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Most merciful God,
you have given your only Son to die for us.
Have mercy on us, and for his sake grant us forgiveness of all
our sins.
By your Holy Spirit increase our knowledge of you and your
will,
and make us obedient to your word,
so that by your grace we may come to eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us, and has given his only Son to die for us, and for his sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in his name he has given the right to become children of God, and has given them his Holy Spirit. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved. Grant this, Lord, to us all.

Amen.

Gospel Reading

Open your Bible and read:

John 8:31-36 *'In my word, you will know the truth'*

or watch this Gospel presentation video <https://video.link/w/R8Kjb>

or at https://youtu.be/WQ7sQ_QQZOQ

After the gospel:

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ.

Sermon

25 October 2020 – Reformation John 8:31-36

I'm going to tell you the truth.

Can you handle the truth?

This Reformation Sunday, you won't hear a sermon about Martin Luther.

You won't hear about how great the Reformation was.

And you won't get a history lesson.

What I want to give you is the truth, straight up.

Make that two truths, actually.

The first is the hard one.

And it bears down on us like a freight train in the gospel reading from John appointed for this day, when Jesus says, "I tell you the truth: everyone who sins is a slave to sin."

Odds are, if we take it seriously, we're not going to like what Jesus says here any better than his original audience did.

To be honest, it's hard not to smirk at the selective memory of Jesus' debaters when they claim, "We are the descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone." *Never been slaves?*

What happened to the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Persians, and now the Romans? Are you kidding?

No, this is no joke, this is denial. which,

But are we any different?

Do we take sin seriously?

I don't mean sin as a theological category, or sin as a tool by which to shame others.

No, I mean sin. *Our sin.*

The kind of sin that makes it really hard for me to trust others the way I should, worrying that they may take advantage of me.

The kind of sin that makes it hard for me to share with others the way I should, afraid that there really isn't enough to go around and I'd better get mine first.

The kind of sin that makes it hard to imagine the future as God sees it and Jesus preaches it as I should, instead accepting the status quo, playing by the established rules, rather than taking care of my neighbor.

And it's not just individual sins, either.

It's this whole broken and fallen world, where I know that nearly every decision I make -- from the clothes I wear to the car I drive -- contributes in adverse ways to health of the planet and the well being of persons continents away from me.

Sin, the sin that enslaves, is inextricably woven into our existence.

As Paul says in the second reading, "*All* have sinned and fallen short."

Seen this way, the words spoken at the moment of confession -- we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves -- may be the most truthful words of our week.

So that's the first word.

We, like Jesus' original audience, are slaves to sin.

We can earn all we want, pretend all we want, say "okay" every time someone asks us how we're doing, but it doesn't change the fact that we are not living up to the vision God has for us and deep down we know it.

That's the truth - the truth will set you free, but first it will annoy you. Or make that - put you to death.

That's, of course, why we'd rather deny our circumstances than face the truth.

Because the truth is that we can grow but not fully change, we can help this world but cannot save it.

We are, ultimately, insufficient for our own salvation, let alone that of anyone else.

And that word, to the self-made man or woman of this age, is death.

Which is why we also need so desperately to hear the **second truth**, -- the truth about God's great love for us.

It comes through loud and clear in the first reading for this day, where after acknowledging that Israel -- and, let's be honest, all of us -- shattered God's covenant and commands, God nevertheless says, "I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sin no more."

That's right, despite everything God doesn't just forgive but also forgets.

God develops a case of intentional amnesia when it comes to our sin and regards us as if we were perfect, blameless and whole.

God regards us, that is, as if we were Christ.

Wait, did I say that truth is the easier one? Hmmm.

I may want to reconsider.

Because here's the thing: as much as it hurts being justly accused, sometimes I think it hurts even more when we're unjustly forgiven.

This may be hard to explain at first, but maybe a story will help.

Picture, for a moment, two young men, brothers, playing soccer on a deserted high school field. After playing for some time, they begin to argue (over what they will later not recall), and then to push and to shove each other. Finally the older of the two shoves the other one violently away, and then, clenching his fists, taunts him saying, "Go ahead. Hit me. Give me an excuse to crush you." The younger one just shakes his head, moving neither closer nor further away. The older one, angered further, repeats his taunt: "C'mon. Take a swing. I dare ya." Again, the younger brother shakes his head from side to side, as the older one continues to badger and ridicule him. Finally, as tears begin flowing out of his eyes, he manages to choke out just one word, "No."

Enraged at being denied, the older one moves forward and shoves his younger brother again, harder than before.

"C'mon. Hit me! Hit me!" The younger brother, tears streaming down his face, says amidst his sobs, "No. I will not hit my brother." "C'mon," the older one jeers again. "Go ahead." "No. I will not hit my brother. I will not hit my brother. I can't hit you, Raymond, I love you."

How do we respond to God's offer of forgiveness?

One *would think* that the pardoned sinner, like a pardoned criminal, would gratefully and earnestly mend his or her ways.

And one *would think* that being confronted by my younger brother's word of love, I would have immediately acknowledged my poor behavior and tried to make amends.

But not so. No.

The only thing that I acknowledged in the face of my brother's grace was that I had not gotten my way, that my brother had frustrated my will, and so, far from making amends, I strode off to our car, bitter and angry, and pulled away, leaving Geoffrey to walk the four miles back to our home.

But then, as I was pulling away, I looked over and saw my brother, with the soccer ball tucked under his arm, walking home with his head bowed in pain, tears still streaming down his face.

And I stopped...but not because I wanted to. No, not even then did I want to stop, but I could do anything else, for finally his love had -- had what? -- won me over?

No, exactly the opposite: Finally his love had broken my will, killed that arrogant, prideful, and insecure self that demands to be always in control.

And believe you me, that is always the way it is.

You are no different. "I will not hit my brother." "I love you." "I will remember your sin no more."

To the one who is unprepared to admit defeat, you see, to admit his or her need for forgiveness, even the purest words of grace give offense and seem a disgrace.

And so God must seize control from us, must, indeed, kill us by grace so that, also by God's grace, we may be raised to new life.

The danger, you see, when reading the classic "Reformation" texts is to jump right to the good stuff: "they are justified by his grace as a gift"; while skipping over the hard part, the part that stings: "*all* have sinned and *all* fall short" and "*all* who have sinned are slaves of sin."

But we do so at tremendous cost, for to ignore the law is then to miss the gospel, to skip over the pain is to reject relief, to deny our illness is to refuse eternal healing.

For 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, is that we *are* sinners -- God's fallen, flailing, and confused children -- from birth to death.

Sinners that no amount of indulgences or good works can ever redeem. Sinners so corroded by fear that only the very

blood of the Son of God can cleanse them, so deeply stained by insecurity that only God alone could forgive them.

But we are also those sinners for whom Christ died.

We are those sinners, that is, who, dead to the law, are now free to love and serve our neighbor extravagantly, daring to care for the poor, to give witness to the gospel, to help our neighbor, and to share all that we have and are no matter what.

For we are, finally, those justified sinners who, having died with Christ, will also rise again with him, to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

That's the truth, -- the two truths, can you handle the truth?

“The truth will set you free.”

We confess our faith

(from Augsburg Confession, articles 4, 5, 7)

As we commemorate the Reformation of the church let's confess our faith using words from the Augsburg Confession.

It is taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works or satisfactions, **but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith,**

when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.

For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness.

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry: that is, provided the gospel and the sacraments.

Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the gospel.

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever.

This is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

We Pray for Ourselves and the World

Before you begin ask one another: 'How can I be praying for you?' Include your prayers for one another in this time of prayer.

Gracious Father, there is nothing that we could offer to you as a sacrifice for our sin. Yet in your great love, you have offered up your own Son, so that through him we may be put right with you. Accept our praise as a sign of our gratitude for the great gift of salvation which you have given to us.

We pray for your church as it lives in the constant process of checking and reforming itself against your holy word. Father, guide us as we search for your will and direction in the new age ahead of us. Give us wisdom in this task, a thirst for your truth and a love of your gospel. Send your Holy Spirit to guide all people who are searching for the truth and lead them to the source of all truth, Jesus Christ.

Father, we thank you for the renewal and reformation you have brought to all your people through our baptism into Christ Jesus. Let each of us be reformed as we drown the old Adam every day, and renewed as we rise to new life in Christ.

We thank you that Christians of differing traditions and opinions are learning to sit down together and talk. We pray for the work of dialogues between churches, and we thank you for any agreement already reached.

We pray for all pastors and teachers of the word. Help them remain faithful to the truth at all times. Let them preach the gospel boldly to people everywhere who are weighed down by guilt and sin so that they might be set free.

We also ask for your blessing upon reformers in society and for all those who work to bring justice and peace in this troubled world. Guide governments and leaders everywhere and inspire them in your truth, so that at all times and in all places your will may be done.

[\(Add your extra prayers one another here\)](#)

Lord God, we trust that by your Spirit you will always lead your church forward in truth. Guide us and lead us, so that your renewing word may give light and truth to the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Blessing

Let us go in peace for Christ has set us free. And the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us now and always. **Amen**

Final songs [LHS 851 Amazing grace](#) OR [Goodness of God](#)
851LH Amazing Grace

Amazing grace, how sweet the
sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to
fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and
snares
I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus
far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his Word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

Amazing grace, how sweet the
sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.
John Newton 1725-1807

Annual Leave and Worship Plans 2020

Pastor Ray has been approved annual leave from 27 October until 24 November 2020.

It has taken some working out but we think we have been able to put in place some plans that will allow Pastor to take overdue annual leave and still maintain a quality worship plan with Holy Communion for St Marks.

[Suggested worship timeline: \(seating bookings still essential\)](#)

25 October – 8.30am, AGM, 9.30am Holy Communion - Pastor Ray (change of leadership positions from AGM)

1 November – online (You Tube) and printed worship – prepared by Pastor Ray and Janelle (before leave)

8 November – 8.30am and 9.30am Holy Communion – Pastor Tom Janke

15 November – online (You Tube) and printed worship – prepared by Pastor Ray and Janelle (before leave)

22 November – 8.30am and 9.30am Holy Communion – Pastor Tom Janke

29 November – 8.30am and 9.30am In Memoriam and Holy Communion,

10.30 am baptism Erin Britton – Pastor Ray

Worship for December 2020: (remember number restrictions and Industry safety requirements)

6 December 8.30am and 9.30am Holy Communion

13 December 8.30am and 9.30am

20 December 8.30am and 9.30am

24 December (Thursday) 5.00pm and 6.30pm

25 December (Friday) 7.00am and 8.30am

27 December No services – maybe online message?

We would then plan for weekly from 3 January

Would you please note and maybe inform others that St Marks has offered weekly worship services and many faith resources since lockdown on 21 March 2020 – in different formats and with greater amount of time, learning of new skills and work required. Our pastoral care as a congregation took on new ways.

We thank God that we were able to offer public face to face worship from June 2020 at Bombala Tce – multiple service times with new restrictions and health guidelines while maintaining a variety of online resources and constantly making decisions that were for the safety and well-being of our elderly and vulnerable and community.

Thank you again for your prayers, encouragement, patience, forgiveness and compassion shown to others.

