

## Lessons for Reformation Sunday

### John 8:31-36

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup>They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup>The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

### Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; <sup>3</sup>though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah <sup>4</sup>There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. <sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. <sup>6</sup>The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. <sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

<sup>8</sup>Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. <sup>9</sup>He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. <sup>10</sup>"Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." <sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

### Jeremiah 31:31-34

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

*John 8:31-36, 2014*

There is kind of a red line that runs through these lessons for this weekend that speaks to the relationship we have with God.

In fact they clearly speak to knowing God

When you read through our lessons you hear the Psalmist say: "...be still and know that I am God..."

There is a certain peace that is not only called for but granted in these words,  
and resignation to God.

You hear the Prophet Jeremiah speak of the new covenant God will make with the people of Israel saying to them;

With this new promise,  
"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they will be my people. . they will know the Lord;"

And John tells us in the gospel lesson, "continue in my word and ...you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

These lessons all have something else in common. Each one of them resides, or originates from a context of stress, fear and anxiety.

Listen to Psalm 46.

...though the earth be changed...mountains  
shake...waters roar and foam...mountains  
tremble...nations are in an uproar...kingdoms

totter...bows are broken, spears shattered and shields  
burned, God says,  
be still, and know that I am God.

Jeremiah speaks to a people who have been conquered,  
displaced, deported, enslaved, who are in exile. They have  
lost hope, not only in their future, but in their God whom  
they believe loves them no longer.

Jeremiah gives the people a new message of hope and  
promise.

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on  
their hearts; and I will be their God and they will be  
my people... they will know the Lord.”

Our gospel reading for today comes to us from the midst of  
all kinds of tension, fear and anxiety about this man who  
has come with a new message and is turning the whole  
religious community upside down.

The woman caught in adultery was dragged before  
Jesus by men expecting Him to give the command to  
stone her as the law required  
and Jesus says, You who are without sin cast the  
first stone.

The crowds were beginning to believe Jesus is the  
Messiah and the Pharisees and temple leaders were  
becoming afraid of the power he had over the people,  
and their fear and anxiety is only relieved in Jesus’  
crucifixion.

Continue in my word and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Is it true then that it is in the anxiety of life,  
living in a world that is out of your control, where  
wars rage,  
where earthquakes shake the ground,  
where tsunamis drown the coast lines,  
that God's word brings peace, comfort, healing and  
restoration.

Luther wrote in *The Freedom of a Christian*.

“no external thing has any influence in producing  
Christian righteousness or freedom, ...One thing, and  
only one thing, is necessary...That one thing is the  
most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, ”

You remember the first verse of the gospel of John; In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God and the Word was God.

And in verse 14 The Word became flesh and lived among us.

The word became the flesh and blood of Jesus.

It is Jesus himself then who stills your heart and mind and sets you free from the anxiety and fear of this world. It is Jesus, in his suffering, death and resurrection who is the new covenant God has made to save you from all your sin and this life.

It is Jesus who is the truth that sets you free not only free from something but for something as well.

He has freed you for loving God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and loving your neighbor as yourself.

As I look back on just this week I have seen the power of God's word at work.

It was where the community gathers to share their loss and grief today.

I went to Savanna and David Mohny's memorial service because that tragedy has affected some of our youth here at All Saints,

And I knew at least one of them would be there.

I thought about the many reasons people would come to that service.

Paying their last respects to Savanna and David,  
supporting the surviving family,  
to be with others who share their grief,  
and maybe to be consoled by the word of  
God.

Whether they come for that or not God's word was spoken and the power of that word could then set their troubled hearts free from the pain, and fear, and sorrow of their loss if only for a moment.

In the longer run that word will continue sustain them and work in the hearts of everyone who hears it to restore the promise,  
to assure those people that He is still their God and they are His people.

I have witnessed an excitement, enthusiasm and commitment of our stewardship committee as they plan for the activities that will take place in the next 5 weeks.

It is the power of God's word that has set this team of people free for God's purpose, to accomplish His will here at All Saints.

I attended a one day youth leader's workshop Friday which is part of a three day event that Kellie Lehr is attending, and there heard and experienced the word of God in that setting where youth leaders give their love, time and resources to continue to learn and develop so they can better serve the youth in their communities.

Wednesday a couple came into the office just as Liz and Joyce were getting ready to pay the bills for the week, and we knew we were going to be short.

They said they had been visiting here for 10 years as seasonal visitors and decided they needed to start supporting what we are doing here.

They wrote a check for \$1,000 and gave it to Liz.

After the bills were paid there was about \$50 left over.

But here is the important message in this.

We need to be able to interpret this as the power of God's word working in people's lives, changing their hearts in ways that enables Him to work in this world, to provide all that is needed here.

That was God providing exactly what was needed at the exact moment it was needed as He promised, through hearts that He had touched with His word.

Today Brookelynn Ashly Rivera will be baptized.

Water is joined with God's word and she will be freed of the sinful state of existence she was conceived into, and receive the promise of eternal life with her God.

And in the power of that Word the Holy Spirit will come to write on her heart God's note of love, his commandments, and she will know that this is her God and she is His child.

Continue in my word and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

The power of God's word changes hearts and lives right here through the work that we do in God's mission.

In the beginning was the word...and the word became flesh and lived among us.

The word still becomes flesh and still lives among us.

God's word takes on your flesh because you are the presence of Christ in the world today.

You are the ones who are called to witness to the power of God's word alive in your heart and life so that other lives can be changed.

You are the ones called to console, to heal, to work out God's purpose in the world, to give generously, to love fully.

Because you know God.

God has changed your life, he has written on your heart,

He has been with you in the noise of everyday life, in the loud crashes of every crisis,

and in the quiet still moments so that you can rest in the promise that He is your God and you are His people.