

Matthew 11:12-19

“Our Reformation Cry!”

Reformation Day (Observed)

October 27, 2024

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Jesus said to the crowd: **“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force”** (Matthew 11:12).

On this Reformation Sunday, we thank the Lord for the long line of saints who have remained steadfast in the truth of God’s Word – the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, saints of the Early Church, the reformers of the one true Faith, and countless faithful men and women today. Each one of them, including you and me, have paid a price in remaining faithful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Yes, we have all paid a price. Now, some much more than others. For many, they have paid the ultimate price – martyrdom. For others, they may have lost long friendships and family, because of remaining faithful to Christ.

As Christians, we must be prepared to suffer for God’s truth, since we know that Satan and his fallen world hate Christ and Christ’s Church. And why is that? Why can’t we just get along?

One chapter earlier in Matthew 10, Jesus chose His Twelve Apostles. He gave them **“authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction”** (Matthew 10:1). Then Jesus gave them their mission: to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand as they heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons (Matthew 10:7-8). Jesus also gave them His promise: **“Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven”** (Matthew 10:32-33).

Hitched to that promise was a declaration of war: **“Whoever receives you receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me”** (Matthew 10:40).

So, why can’t we just all get along? It’s because of the enemy – *Satan, his minions, and this fallen world* – which doesn’t much like incursions into its domain.

Following His instructions to the Twelve Apostles, Jesus went on preaching and teaching. He was preaching and teaching in enemy territory – Satan’s fallen world. Jesus went on preaching and teaching, since He came to rescue and restore this fallen world.

As this is happening, John the Baptist is locked up in prison awaiting his execution. There, in his cell, John is wondering if, in fact, Jesus of Nazareth, is the promised Messiah, who has come to restore all of humanity. Or should his disciples look for another? To that question, Jesus says to John’s disciples, ***“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by Me”*** (Matthew 11:4-6).

Jesus then asks the crowds about John. ***“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing?”*** (Matthew 11:7b-8a)

Did the crowds seek someone to be swayed with the shifting winds of public opinion? No. Did they seek a man dressed in nice clothes like that of a powerful king? No.

What the crowds saw was the messenger preparing the way for the Christ.

This is what led Jesus to say: ***“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force”*** (Matthew 11:12).

You see, when God took upon Himself human flesh, the fallen world, Satan, and our own sinful nature didn’t really appreciate it. Yet, Jesus still comes. And when Jesus comes, His kingdom comes. Jesus comes forcefully into the fallen world – a world enslaved by sin, death and the devil. And where Jesus comes, His evil foes fight back.

John the Baptist experienced violence for preparing the way of the Lord. He was arrested. He was imprisoned. His severed head was placed on a platter.

Jesus, too, experienced violent opposition. The Pharisees and Sadducees repeatedly challenged His preaching, teaching, and healing. He was falsely accused. He was beaten and flogged. He was betrayed by His own friends. He faced the worst kind of capital punishment – crucifixion. He was nailed to a tree and suffocated to death.

Jesus' apostles and disciples also experienced violent opposition. They were locked up. They were beaten. They were stoned. They were beheaded. They were poisoned. They were crucified. And all for simply preaching salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus alone.

But despite the violence, God's kingdom keeps pressing forward. His royal banners forward go!

You see, even though Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, He also descended into hell in victory! That third day, He rose from the dead! Then He ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!

Jesus came to redeem us lost and condemned sinners. He purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with silver or gold, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death so that you and I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness!

For nearly two thousand years, the kingdom of heaven continues pressing forward in this fallen world. And His enemy is still pressing hard against it. Those ***“spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”*** (Ephesians 6:12) are not just going to take the loss and lie down.

As you and I know, Satan and his fallen world are violently opposed to Jesus and His saving and forgiving ways as He works through His Means of Grace – *His Word and Sacraments* – in His Church.

So, Satan and his fallen world continually attack Christ and His Church. They call Christ and His Church unloving. They seek to re-make Christ's Church into the image of the Great Deceiver. Satan and his fallen world do not want sin called out. They don't want to live by God's Word. Instead, Satan and his fallen world desire to remake Christ's Church into a lazy, go along to get along type of false Christianity. This is what we face today. This is what Christ's Church has always faced.

This is why Christ's Church must always be reformed. This is why it must always be called back to the saving work of Jesus Christ, the Church's Bridegroom. For if we get lazy and flabby by not reading, hearing and studying God's Word, we will form a new kind a Christianity – a false Christianity. A Christianity without Jesus.

For if we get lazy and flabby by not joining the assembly of believers, among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the Sacraments rightly administered, we will form a new kind of Christianity – a false Christianity. Again, a Christianity without Jesus.

Recently, CBS Mornings aired a segment called “The State of Spirituality with Lisa Ling”¹ in which she interviewed a transvestite “Lutheran” “pastor” named Drew Stever. In case you are lost, Drew is a woman cosplaying as a man. And in case you are further lost, pondering how a transvestite can be a pastor. And to calm all fears, this “pastor” is not in fellowship with us.

In the interview, Lisa Ling said to Stever, *“There is a lot of people who say that according to the Bible, God made man and woman, and that couldn’t be any more clearly defined. How do you respond to them?”* To that question, this confused “pastor” said, *“[The Bible] is hard to relate to modern-day times, because it wasn’t written for 2024. It was written for then.”*

The thing is, God’s Word never changes and that is the message of the Reformation. In fact, that is the motto of the Lutheran reformers: “VDMA”, which is a Latin acronym for ***“The Word of the Lord endures forever”*** (1 Peter 2:24-25). If God’s Word did change, we would have no sure and certain hope. We would be tossed to and fro by wind and waves. But thanks be to God, His Word never changes. So, His eternal promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation are sure.

Like the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, saints of the Early Church, and the reformers, we ought to commit fully to the purity of our Christian doctrine. For in that doctrine, we hold the great truths taught by Holy Scripture, such as God’s creating and preserving power, our justification by grace through faith in Christ alone, Christ’s presence in His Means of Grace, the clarity of God’s Law in the moral issues of our day, and of our sure forgiveness won for us through the crucified and risen Christ.

On this Reformation Sunday, may we take our stand and never budge from God’s truths as He teaches us in His Word. Christ says: ***“He who has ears to hear, let him hear”*** (Matthew 11:15). This is our Reformation cry! So, may our ears be joined to right understanding and saving faith! Let our hearing be joined to His saving Word and our hearts to His Word! Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDtGbosAbFA&t=73s>