

## The Reformation

Next week, we'll be celebrating Reformation Sunday. It is appropriate to spend some time this month focusing on the birth of the Lutheran church. We celebrate the rediscovery that the promise of eternal life in Heaven, our VERY Salvation, comes to us as a gift. the discovery that a man is made righteous by faith NOT from earning their way to Heaven, NOT from our trying to be perfect like God, but rather it was given to us as a gift.

Before the Reformation the Righteousness of God, was considered to be something which separated us from God. God is righteous and we are not. The spiritually perfect, could not abide with the imperfect. The early church taught that you had to earn righteousness, by doing good works. But instead, the Reformation discovered that "righteousness" was a gift given to us by God, and once given, made it possible for us to be with God. To know the simple message that "your relationship with God, and all that is implied with it" was won for you at the cross and received only through faith: That was the great discovery of the Reformation, the discovery of the central message of the Gospel. Do not put your trust in your own works nor even your own understanding. Trust that God has done it all for you. Amen This is the Good news of God. This is the gospel.

You know, one of the greatest tragedies in the Christian church is the fragmentation of the Christian message. You hear different church denominations preaching different "gospels" sometimes each denouncing the other. My personal burden regarding this issue, is for the new Christian. If I may speak on behalf of the new Christian, the fragmented voice of the church, is devastating. For the new Christian, the fragmented voice casts grave doubt upon my own faith. It causes me to doubt. "Who is right?" What if "what I believe" is not right? What if I am not good enough? How do I know for sure that I am going to heaven? And my brothers and sister in Christ, this state of affairs is unacceptable. For the sake of new believers, for the good of those just coming to faith the Church has to return to a unified confession.

And this is not the only fragmentation which causes undue stress in new believers. The conflict between the world of science and the spiritual world, has caused confusion among new believers. You see... in this world – "seeing is believing." So, because so much of science is to bring order to "what we see," the new believer implicitly trusts science. For them, any conflict between Science and Christianity lays doubt on Christianity. And these fragmentations, my friends, are a tragedy. They put a burden on new Christians. The fragmentation of the

Christian message, is intolerable. It is intolerable, because the very power of the Christian message is in its unity, for it is a message from God.

Before I became a Christian, I spent a lot of time thinking about this. I would study the theology of different churches, and the teaching of science. I sought after a way to reconcile the apparent conflicts. One of the reasons I studied Physics in the first place, was because I felt that if I could just understand everything in this physical world, then it would all make sense. However, the more I understood about this universe, the more I realized... "There was even more that I DIDN'T understand about this universe." I started to realize that no matter how much I understood there was much more outside of science,.. for which there was no answers. There was so much outside the domain of science... like questions Why do innocent people suffer? Why does it seem that evil people prosper. Why does it seem that Life wasn't fair. Science just didn't seem to explain it all. In fact, I wondered if we were capable of understanding it all. As it turns out Solomon, the son of King David struggled with the same questions in "his" quest for wisdom. Solomon found that it was more than just "We jus' ain't smart enough." Solomon was forced to conclude that the reason why the world cannot be completely understood, was that... (in his words....) "What is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted." This was a tremendous revelation to me.

You see, the Gospel message of Christ, is indeed simple and unified. However, when it gets applied to this world, it can look fragmented, not because the message is fragmented, not even because the church is fragmented, but rather because the world it is being applied to, is fragmented. The world was like a jigsaw puzzle but one which was lacking several pieces. So, while the picture is complete. The image we see, appears fragmented. This is the problem with the world. It's just missing pieces. That is its nature. As Solomon said "What is crooked cannot be straightened." I have studied the major religions of the world. One of the missing pieces is the answer to the question. "What is my purpose?" This is the question that every human being struggles with at some time in their life. What is MY purpose in this world? And there is a reason why the answer to this question is so important. We seek the answer because deep inside I want to know... "Do I matter?" "Do I matter?" or is it really like the preacher in Ecclesiastes says There is no purpose to this world. "Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." Do I matter? Well... all praise to God, I do know the answer. I do know the answer and so do you.

The answer is that "you do matter." You matter a lot. From God's point of view... Everything is NOT meaningless. You do matter. You matter a lot to God.

So the two things people need to know. 1. You are loved by God. 2. Salvation is a gift from a loving God. This, in fact, was the main discovery of the Reformation.

As Christians, you may think... What's so complicated about that? Where is the fragmentation? Well, the discovery of the Reformation was not just for the Christian, it was for the world. Did you to know that for many non-Christians of this world... not only do they not know God, not only do they not know Jesus but, the Love of God is a non-issue. Buddhists and Hindus believe "I am god." "you are god." "Love, therefore, is irrelevant. Muslim and Jews believe the love of God is a non-issue, too. They believe that obedience to the laws of God is all that matters. God doesn't love you, because you are a slave. Salvation is "earning the rewards of God" by obedience. Even amongst Christians, there are some who believe that the love of God must be earned: that the Christian walk is one of penance... for them to suffer enough so God will love them. The people of this world need to know that

1. God loves them.
2. that salvation is a gift from a loving God.
3. That they do matter a lot. They matter a lot.

*God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. [John 3:16]*

This is the very thing which drove me to become a pastor... This message is what caused me to change my career from Physicist to pastor. If there really is such a place as Hell. If mankind really is by nature, sinful and unclean. If the wages of sin is death. If there really was a man named Jesus, who died for those sins so that those who believe in him would avoid Hell and have eternal life in Heaven... If these things are true... then no \$3 billion space based laser no fusion reactor supplying a cheap source of energy to an entire nation no understanding of the nature of the universe was important as the eternal life of even one human. Nothing matters as much as the rescue of the 4 billion souls who do not know Jesus, 4 billion souls who do not know that God loves them. Nothing matters as much as sharing the Gospel to those in danger of going to Hell. The people of this world matter a lot to God!

Not only that but the world craves to know God. It really does. The world craves to know the love of God. This world is dying to know the purpose of their life, because basically everyone wants to know "Do I matter?" And the answer does not come from this world! The question of "do I matter?" cannot be answered "in this world." It cannot because these questions are concerns of the eternal. The

people of this world will never truly be secure in “their worldly needs” until their eternal needs are met first. As scripture says Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be granted unto you. Secure your eternal needs first, then the worldly ones will follow. IF you seek after the worldly one first, and you will have nothing.

The questions.... Do I matter? Do I matter to God? Underneath there is an even deeper question being asked. You see, since the time of Creation. more accurately, since the time of the Fall, when our relationship with God was broken, we have needed a relationship with God we hunger for it. When Mankind fell into sin, our ability to feed that hunger was lost. When Mankind fell into sin, our ability to see that hunger was lost and with it our ability to know the meaning of life was lost as well. our knowledge about “Do it matter?” was lost. People who do not know Christ” try to fill that need,... that hunger,... with things of this world. But they will never be satisfied, until that deepest need is satisfied... a relationship with God. What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose? Do I matter? God says You do matter. You matter a lot. God loves you so much that he sent his only begotten son to die on a cross for you, so that your relationship with God would be healed, your most basic need would be satisfied. You are a child of God. You matter a lot. Your purpose for being on Earth is to live in that relationship with God, to live as a child of God. The most basic need, a relationship with God has been given to us through Jesus Christ.

People need to know this. You know, this was a great revelation to the people of the ancient world. In the ancient Near East, people believed that the gods created the world for themselves, for their own enjoyment. Typically, humans were created only as an afterthought, because the gods needed slave labor or worship or something. But the Bible teaches that God made everything for our enjoyment! It tells us that we are special. We were created to be the image of God almighty.

This was the wonderful message, the wonderful gift of the Reformation. This leads me to my final point. Let us continue the work of the Reformers. There are many people out there who do not think they matter to God. There are many people out there who do not think that God loves them. They do not know that they are special to Him. They do not know that they are important to God. God is calling us to let them know, that He loves them. May the love of God the father guard your minds and hearts, and keep you steadfast to life eternal, through Jesus Christ. Amen.