

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

October 24-25, 2026

Reformation Weekend

“If the Son Makes You Free”

John 8:31-36

³¹ Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” ³³ 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’?”

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

On this Reformation weekend, I’m looking for your help preaching. When I say, “If the Son makes you free,” can you please respond, “**you will be free indeed.**” If the Son makes you free, **you will be free indeed!**

Reformation. Reform. Reform what? Well, it all began with the Catholic church. In Martin Luther’s time, the Catholic church, was under Pope Leo X control, as the supreme earthly head of the Christian Church. It was the one and only religious authority. The Church taught that salvation was a work of God and the good works of men, but that grace and salvation were mediated through the priesthood and the holy sacraments. It was viewed not just as a religious institution, but as the complete fabric of society, culture, and salvation.

When Martin was a monk, studying Catholic theology, he was deeply troubled by his own sin. He knew that he could – by his own good works – never measure up to God’s standards. This troubled him, not only his personal sins, but the nature of sin which kept him and everyone else enslaved. A friend encouraged him to begin reading the Bible. One day he was reading the first chapter of the book of Romans the 17th verse: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” He finally understood that we are only made right in God’s eyes (sin and all!) by Jesus, through His death on the cross. We cannot redeem ourselves – we cannot make ourselves right with God, without Jesus’s death and resurrection.

Therefore, if the Son makes you free, **you will be free indeed!**

The church taught that people could buy ‘indulgences’ that would cancel their sin in eternal life. The Dominican friar, Johann Tetzel, launched an indulgence selling campaign with the slogan, *"Every time a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs,"* making people believe they could buy their way—or their dead relatives' way—out of purgatory. Luther knew that this took away the concept of repentance and God's grace to forgive. Plus, he also was upset that German peasants were giving all their savings to the church.

This indulgence selling was the tipping point for then priest Martin to rise up against the church. He wrote out 95 statements, formally titled the *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*), and nailed them to the Church door in Whittenburg, Germany, inviting an academic conversation with the University of Whittenburg faculty.

Feeling threatened by Rev Martin's thoughts and this invitation, Pope Leo excommunicated Luther as a heretic and then he was brought before Emperor Charles V, the young ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. Charles offered Luther a chance to take back his writings, but he did not.

He said that unless he was convinced by the testimony of Scripture or clear reason, his conscience was captive to the Word of God, declaring: *"I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience."*

Because, if the Son makes you free, **you will be free indeed!**

With a mark upon his head, Luther fled to safety in Whittenburg castle where he rewrote the Bible from Latin into German, English and French so common people could read it for themselves and not rely upon priests for interpretation.

When God revealed the truth of being saved by grace through faith to Rev. Luther, he had no idea the ripple effect. His ideas went viral because reformers effectively harnessed Johannes Gutenberg's movable-type printing press to mass-produce pamphlets, books, and translated texts.

The Catholic church was split in two and thus was born Protestantism; the protestants. Reformers broke the political power of Rome. Local monarchs and German princes gained the right to choose the official religion of their lands (formalized in the Peace of Augsburg in 1555), paving the way for independent nation-states.

Because Protestantism emphasized personal study of scripture (*sola scriptura*), literacy rates surged, and leaders like John Calvin pioneered early public school systems for ordinary children.

The "Protestant Work Ethic" of hard work, and pursuit of vocation became tied to spiritual calling, accelerating the growth of private enterprise and early capitalism.

Challenging centuries of orthodox dogma opened doors for modern scientific thinking, free speech, and individual rights.

God was in the midst of all this change, for if the Son makes you free, **you will be free indeed!**

Jesus is as clear as He can be. If you want to be my disciples, continue in my word. Now the question is not, 'what is the Word.' The question is, 'who is my Word.' The Word is Jesus the Christ, Son of God. He is the Logos, The Word, present with God at the beginning of creation. Born also to us in the manger at Bethlehem.

We believe the Bible, the holy scriptures are the manger which holds the Word – Jesus Christ within their pages. Jesus invites us into a relationship; just like a relationship you might have with a best friend or spouse. We spend time within that relationship. We trust it. We commit to making it deep and mutual and real.

Jesus says, 'when you abide in me and with me, when you remain with me, I live in you and you live in me.' This is the relationship where we find freedom.

As contemporary Americans we very much value our freedom. Our freedom to vote. To travel where we wish. To buy what we want with our hard earned dollars. To not let anyone tell us what to do. But within that freedom comes a certain kind of slavery.

Slavery to cultural norms which tell us what we 'should' want, have, or need to be 'happy.' This kind of slavery is a sly and manipulative one. It can sneak in like a thief in the night. Thinking we are really free, we end up behaving in ways that are disloyal to what we confess are our religious beliefs.

Again, it is this relationship with Jesus that frees us from this bondage. Free to follow God's will. Free to accept God's saving grace; not our works that save us. Free to be the person whom God created; unique and precious, without needing to

fit in or be like anyone else. Free to know the peace of forgiveness without dragging around the bag of sin and wrongdoings which keep us from dancing.

Jesus, the Word who gives us the Words of God, is our true freedom. On this Reformation weekend, we shall remember, If the Son makes you free, **you will be free indeed!** Amen and amen.