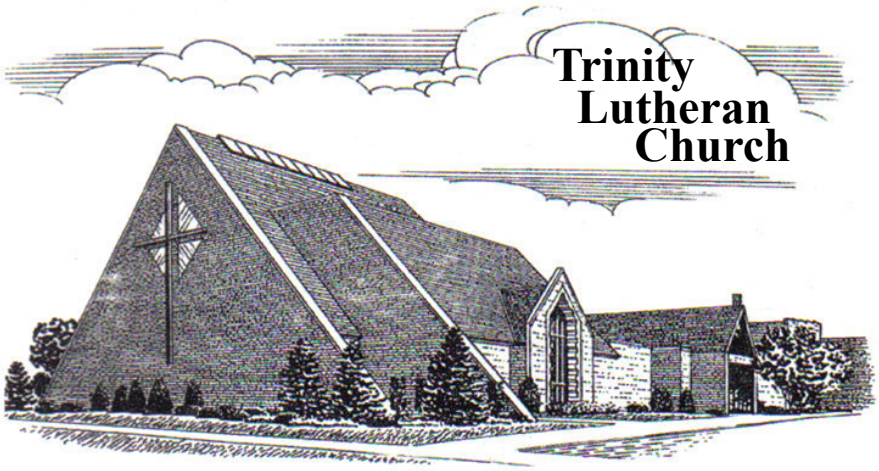
Reformation Day



Oct. 19-25, 2026

Weekly Outline

Invocation
L: In the way of your testimonies I delight.

C: I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

L: Let us pray:

O Lord, take away from me all coldness, all wanderings of the thoughts, and fix my soul upon thee and thy love, O merciful Lord and Saviour, in this hour of prayer.

C: Amen.

Scripture

Oct. 19: Revelation 14:6-7

Oct. 21: Romans 3:19-28

Oct. 23: John 8:31-36

Devotion

Closing Prayer
L: Ever blessed Trinity, to thy mercy I commit this day, my body and soul, together with all my ways and undertakings. I beseech thee to be gracious unto me; enlarge my heart and open my lips, that I may praise and magnify thy name which alone is holy. And as thou hast made me for the praise of thy holy name, grant that I may yield my life a sacrifice to thy honor in humble love and fear.
C: Amen.

Monday

The Reformation began on Oct. 31, 1517, when a monk named Martin Lutheran nailed 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg. Martin didn't intend to start the Reformation when he did this. The theses were academic statements written in Latin (which the common people couldn't read). But hidden in those theses was a question that had plagued Luther his entire life. How does a man become righteous?

Luther knew that he was a sinner. But though the Medieval church offered many remedies for sin, Luther could not convince himself that any of them made him righteous. He was convinced that if even a drop of sin remained in him, he was damned. Luther's rediscovery of the Gospel began with that conviction. That he lived beneath God's judgement. That is where our first reading for Reformation Day begins as well. In Revelation 14, the apostle John sees an angel flying over head with "an eternal gospel to proclaim." But the angel doesn't proclaim forgiveness, instead he says, "Fear God, and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come." Salvation begins when we are brought to the awareness that our lives will be judged by God. And here is the judgment, "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

But while the Gospel may begin with God's judgement, it doesn't end there. No, it continues to the announcement that all sins have been forgiven for the sake of Jesus Christ, who died that we might live. That realization was a long time coming for Martin Luther. It meant escaping from the tangled web of works righteousness that had accumulated in the Medieval church over many centuries. But the Gospel that he rediscovered is the eternal Gospel, true for every time and place. Jesus Christ is the Savior of sinners. Him, and him alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday

It is the most natural thing to think—that a man becomes good by doing good. In other words, that goodness is learned much like a skill. A man becomes a pianist by playing the piano. A woman becomes a quilter by making quilts. We learn through doing. And if we do enough, we embody the skill we learn. It becomes a part of who we are. But while skills work exactly like that, goodness doesn't. We don't become good by doing good. We are made good, and then we do good.

There are many reasons for this. But the main one isn't something we often think about. That we don't know what is good apart from God. Only God is truly good, and whatever we call "good" is ultimately derived from him. It is nothing more than a creaturely participation in his perfection. But if all goodness comes from God, then what could it possibly mean to be good apart from God? That would be an absurdity. And we see signs of that absurdity all around us, for fallen man has labeled all kinds of things as "good" even though they are obviously wicked. No one is good but God alone. So we aren't made good by what we do. We don't even understand what good is if we don't know God. Rather, we must first be made good by God. Only then can we do good. That is key to understanding the Gospel.

Paul writes in Romans 3, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in God's sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." The Law does not give us the knowledge that we are good, but that we are sinners. But God has provided a means for our redemption outside of the Law, through faith in Christ, who is the goodness of God for us. And not only is Christ God's goodness for us, but he becomes God's goodness in us as he remakes us in his own image. Then we do good. Then we produce good fruit, because we have been made good trees through Christ's work in us. The Gospel is that God makes sinners good. Not by what we do, but by faith in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday

If you asked a Lutheran to define the Gospel, he would probably say something like, "The forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ." That would be a good definition. But the Gospel is many sided. It transforms us in ways that go beyond one description. Another way of defining the Gospel would be freedom.

That is what Jesus told the Jews in John 8, when he said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." That confuses them because they had never been enslaved, so in what sense could they be set free? Of course, the freedom that Jesus promises is not an external freedom from human enslavement. Rather, it is freedom from a slavery all participate in but few recognize, slavery to sin. That is true slavery, because no matter how hard we labor, we can't escape our sinful nature. Not only do we fail to escape it, but it compels us to destroy our own lives doing what we know to be evil. Everyone should seek after true freedom, which is the freedom to live as God intended us to live and be all that God intended us to be when he said, "Let us make man in our image." But even if we understand our problem (and we rarely do), there is nothing we can do to escape our slavery apart from divine intervention. That is why Jesus concludes by saying, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

The Gospel is that out of his great love for sinners, God sent his Son into the world to set the sinner free. To set us free from guilt, to set us free from Satan, to set us free from our sinful nature. It is only in Christ that we become the people God intended us to be. It is only in Christ that we are set free. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Prayer

You may pray one or more of the following after dinner or before bed:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I pray you that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

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Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take; and this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Visit, O Lord, our home, and drive from it all the snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell in it to preserve us in peace, and may your blessing be upon us evermore; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

A Parent's Blessing

You may place your hand on the head of your child before kissing them goodnight and say:

My loved one, rest securely,
for God this night will surely
from peril guard your head.
Sweet slumbers may he send you
and bid his hosts attend you
and through the night watch o'er your bed. Amen.

Memory Verse

