

Reformation – 2026

Revelation 14:6-7

Romans 3:19-28

John 8:31-36

We are the recipients of a remarkable heritage. Christ's church has endured dark ages, times wherein the light of Truth seemed veiled, and another spirit governed the times. When you treat one of your prize possessions shabbily, it will suffer. If a marriage isn't valued, if a husband doesn't treat his wife with love and charity and grace, then she will not flourish as she might. We are stewards. We defend and protect our marriages. We defend and protect our children. We defend and protect the heritage of the Gospel.

Rome obscured the Gospel. It's true. Humanly speaking, false doctrine diminishes the church, and people are put at risk. Rome obscured Christ, obscured grace, obscured the salvation which our Lord procured for all people. It was a dark time. The faith of Christ's little lambs suffered. Rome's churchmen guarded their worldly empire with a dark ferocity. And the light of God's grace, the Light of the Truth embedded in holy Scripture came bursting onto the scene. Martin Luther was the human instrument, but the power of the Reformation was God's Word, God's Holy Spirit, the power of Truth. The Lord Christ holds the destiny of His church in the hollow of His hand. As the Reformation unfolded, the bow of God's promise was once again seen resplendent overhead. It was love. Christ's cross is pure salvation and that love gripped the hearts of men and the promise of God's love was wondrously infectious. The Light of the Gospel exposed the darkness of works righteousness. Truth put false doctrine to shame. Grace liberated those held in slavery.

What's our heritage? The Gospel itself is our heritage. Christ's death and resurrection is our heritage. Love is our heritage. And we are stewards. It's despicable for a husband to mistreat his wife. It is despicable for the Gospel to be abused. The greatest gifts are to be treated with the greatest care. We defend what is precious. We luxuriate in what Christ has given us. He has set us free. Freedom is in His Word. Fidelity to His Word is fidelity to Him. Our age is growing darker. People know it. And they want the Light. Believers are attracted to the Light. Christ calls them and they come to Him (Matthew 11:28). "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). We are stewards. We have a calling, a life of faith to live. Christ's Word is our heritage and we will defend it; we will treasure it.

Sin is in this world. There is a cold formula regarding sin. The one who sins is a slave to sin (John 8:34). Unabated, that cold formula ends in death (Romans 6:23). Jesus addressed our slavery directly. He said: "Unless you believe that I AM you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). Jesus of Nazareth is God in the flesh – the great I AM. He came into this world because you were in slavery. Your slavery required God to be made man, required God to fulfill the law, required the Messiah to die as ransom. And that's exactly what He did. Jesus atoned for your sin and delivered you from slavery. Jesus was lifted up on a cross to deliver you from slavery. He died bearing your sins and rose again to justify you before the Father (Romans 4:25). If anyone clouds this Truth, they cloud the Light, they cloud God's glory and they put people at risk. That's not going to happen here. We are stewards.

I don't believe that there's a single sour customer here. I don't believe that we think that we're better than anyone else, because we're not. There's nothing elitist about being a Lutheran. We hold to God's Word and that makes us happy. Holy Scripture is our authority and that makes us happy. The content of Christ's life is unleashed through that Word, and we enjoy being in His presence. Not everyone will agree with us. So be it. We know the truth and the truth has set us free. The light of Christ shines in this place and we don't pretend that it doesn't. Sin is real. My guilt is real. There is only One who delivers me from the slave quarters of hell and puts me in His Father's house. He holds your life in the hollow of His hand. He has prepared a place for you in His Father's house (John 14:2-3). Jesus is our priceless treasure. We are stewards.

Jesus was calling the people right in front of Him and they made a fuss. Forgiveness, life, and salvation were calling to these slaves and they made a fuss. Freedom; Jesus had it. Freedom; Jesus came to give it – His blood, His righteousness, His sacrifice. Those who made a fuss needed it. “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31). Abide in my word. The Gospel – it isn't a weekly stroll through divine matters; it isn't a Sunday hobby or a religious fix that allows you to do whatever you want Monday through Saturday. We live in Christ. We live in His Word. There's no alternative, unless slavery and death appeal to you. Some don't want to admit that they are slaves. So, they fuss. They string words together meant to pass as arguments, but all they're doing is fussing. “They answered him, ‘We are the offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?’” (John 8:33). Those are just words strung together meant to pass as an argument. It's altogether false. They *had* been enslaved. They'd been serially enslaved to the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians.

You will encounter people who simply string words together meant to pass as a valid argument. Here are a few examples. Mary shares her grace with us. No. Jesus doesn't, can't give us His body to eat and His blood to drink. No. Christ died only for the elect. No. All of those are examples of words being strung together meant to pass as an argument. All those statements defy Christ's Word, put people at risk, and cloud the truth. The aroma of slavery is in those words. Saying as much may make you unpopular. Jesus didn't care. He addressed their situation, which also happens to be my situation, and yours. “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:35).

Slave to sin, not staying in the house – that doesn't sound too good. Slave to lust. Slave to pride. Slave to gossip and greed and drunkenness and lying and laziness and bitterness and hate. Slave to Satan. That's the bottom line. Slave to self, slave to corruption, slave to darkness. No liberty, no place at the Father's table, no light invading the soul – slavery and chains and judgment and finality in a dark place. Sin is real and present and powerful. You can't break the bonds. You can't pray your way out of slavery, work your way out of slavery, beg your way out of slavery. Someone must intervene. Only a free man can set slaves free. There is only one free man. Sinless; holy beyond human comprehension; faithful to the Father; true God and true man in one person; the incarnate Son of God is the only One who can set us free. Jesus' humility sets us free. Jesus' blood sets us free. Jesus' love sets us free. On a horrific cross, Jesus became the only captive man as He bore all sin and submits to His Father's wrath. It is a blessed exchange –

your slavery and His freedom (2 Corinthians 5:21). “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). That is the cry that sets you free.

How will you use it? Your freedom, how will you use it? We are stewards. We are stewards of God’s Word, stewards of freedom, stewards of grace. God’s Word is our heritage. God’s grace is our heritage. God’s Truth is our heritage. We will steward these gifts in a way that glorifies our Lord and serves His kingdom. We celebrate today. We are rich in love for we are free. Truth is our hallmark. Christ is our King. He is risen, Easter is freedom and freedom is here.