

Sermon John 8 31 36 22nd S af P Reformation Sunday

Sermon: Reformation Sunday - 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

Text: John 8:31-36 (v. 31)

Theme: To hold to Jesus' teaching

Goal: SOLA SCRIPTURA – The Scripture alone is the foundation and source of our faith

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We like to know what is happening around the world. We watch the News, we read newspapers, and we switch on the radio... When the News tells us about the war in Syria or in Lebanon, we believe it. When the News tells us about storms and hurricanes in Japan and in the USA, we believe it. When the weather channel tells us that it will rain tomorrow, we believe it and sometimes we change our plans because of the weather forecast. Not only we as Christians believe the News, but everyone does.

Why doesn't everyone believe in the Good News of the Bible? In my opinion this unbelief in the Scriptures is the main cause of the foundation of so many different churches – each of them says they have the truth; and this unbelief is the cause of several problems in our society as well. People don't accept the truth of the Bible, but criticize its teaching and doubt its reports, following each one his own way of life.

I – Luther and the Scriptures

The Scripture posed a serious challenge to Martin Luther. The Church Councils Decrees and the books of Theologians and Philosophers were favored at the expense of the Bible. When the young Luther studied Theology, he had to study all the Systematic books of the old Church's Fathers and he had to study the Doctrine of the Church, but never a Bible was presented to him. After years of study, - and Luther was a brilliant student, - he got the degree of Doctor in Theology. He had to

promise at that ceremony to study and to teach the truth of the Bible. And he began to do so, studying the Bible day and night, searching in it for the will of God for his personal life. As he was reading, he became more and more desperate about himself and his sins. The “justice of God” was oppressing him, as God was requiring him to do the impossible: To perfectly obey the Commandments, to 100 percent comply with them.

But God was gracious to him and opened his mind to understand and to believe that “the justice of God” is not only what God requires from humankind, but, overall, it is the justice that God offers to all through the sacrifice of Christ, as we heard in the reading from Romans 3. This Good News was the key to understand the entire Bible in the perspective of God's love and of the salvation by faith in Christ alone.

Luther translated the Bible to the common language of the people, so that all could read the Good News, not only the scholars who understood Latin, Greek and Hebrew. And Luther was successful and blessed in his work. The Bible became an accessible and beloved book to all, bringing comfort and peace through faith in Jesus to many at Luther's time till now.

We are heirs of the Reformation and we have to preserve the Bible in our midst as a precious treasure, believing in its promises and following its paths. The words of Jesus in our Gospel address us as well: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free;” free from sin through the forgiveness by the sacrifice of Jesus; free from a hopeless life through the resurrection of Jesus; free from condemnation through the redemption we have by faith in Jesus.

SOLA SCRIPTURE – The Scripture alone is one of the pillars of the Reformation. Faithfulness to the Bible is required of each believer. When Luther explained the Lord's Prayer, he linked the three first petitions to the Scriptures. He wrote:

The First Petition

Hallowed be Thy name.

*How is God's name kept holy? God's name is kept holy when the **Word of God** is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to **God's Word** profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!*

The Second Petition

Thy kingdom come.

*How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe **His Holy Word** and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.*

The Third Petition

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

How is God's will done?

*God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in **His Word** and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.*

II – Jesus and the Scriptures

Jesus always referred His teachings to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He was the fulfillment of God's promises of salvation and eternal life. Jesus didn't bring a new way of salvation, but He accomplished the way God was preparing from the very beginning. Therefore Paul was able to write to the Romans in Chapter 3:21-22: “But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is

given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

The Jews of Jesus' time were strongly bound to their traditions and to the theology of their Rabbis. Jesus told them: “If you hold to **my** teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Jesus presents Himself as “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). In a discussion with the Jewish leaders, He said: “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40).

Conclusion: Luther wrote in the fourth stanza of The Mighty Fortress: *“God's Word forever shall abide, no thanks to foes, who fear it; for God Himself fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit.”*

Let us hold to Jesus' teaching day and night, believing in it and following it. Many of the other so call “truths” are seasonal, depending on the general opinion of the people or on the waves of political or philosophical sciences. The truth of God's Word comes from the beginning and has never changed, giving comfort and peace to thousands and millions of people. The Bible is an old book, a very old book; but still relevant to our present day. No other book from that time has the popularity and the message that reaches our heart as the Bible has. Why? Because it is the living Word of our God, who presents us Jesus Christ, our Saviour, giving us freedom, peace, hope and all the spiritual blessing we need for this life and for eternal life. SOLA SCRIPTURA – SOLA GRATIA – SOLA FIDE: Only the Scripture, Only by Grace, Only by Faith. Thanks be to God for the Reformation and for the Bible. Amen.