

October 29, 2017
Reformation Sunday

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The renewed covenant will not be breakable, but like the old covenant it will expect the people to live upright lives. To know the Lord means that one will defend the cause of the poor and needy (Jer. 22:16). The renewed covenant is possible only because the Lord will forgive iniquity and not remember sin. Our hope lies in a God who forgets.

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28

Paul’s words stand at the heart of the preaching of Martin Luther and the other Reformation leaders. No human beings make themselves right with God through works of the law. We are brought into a right relationship with God through the divine activity centered in Christ’s death. This act is a gift of grace that liberates us from sin and empowers our faith in Jesus Christ.

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

²¹But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, ²³since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

The Prayers of the People

Confident in the gracious and ever-widening mercy of God, let us pray for the world, the body of Christ, and all who yearn for wholeness of life.

A brief silence

Liberate us from our bondage to sin, God of freedom, that your church would continually be reshaped and reformed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Show your righteousness, God of justice, that all who are oppressed and marginalized, forgotten, and cast aside would be given voice by elected leaders and compassionate citizens. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Make wars to cease in all the world, God of peace, that all strife, violence, and bloodshed give way to reconciliation, compassion, and new life. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Take us by our hand, God of companionship, when we are paralyzed by our fears and unable to step out in boldness. Give us courage to walk confidently with you. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Give your stillness, God of calm, to all who are facing illness, surgery, or any uncertainty of health. May they know that their times are in your ever-healing hands. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for continual reformation in this and every assembly. In new beginnings, impart wisdom. In established traditions, inspire creativity. In all ministries, revive our hope in the one who makes all things new. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Write your law of love on our hearts, God of all, that we, like our forebears in faith, would be unswerving in our witness to your grace that is ours through the gift of faith. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Listen to us when we call upon you, most merciful God, and grant us grace to entrust our lives and our world to your unfailing love, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**