

## 500<sup>th</sup> Reformation Day observed, October 29, 2017

20th Sunday after Trinity, Proper 25(30)

LUTHERAN

### LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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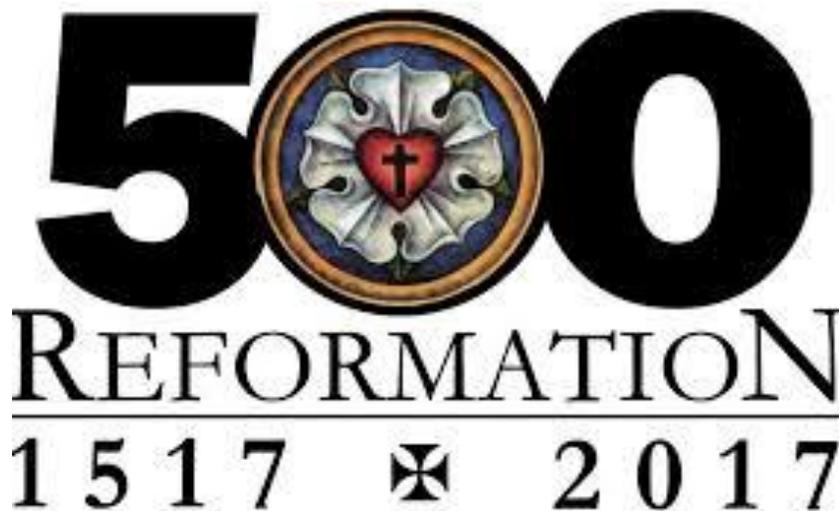
or

**through Facebook at either “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”,  
“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

October 26, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44130

*Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa.*



<http://www.salcdover.org/reformation-500.html> St Andrews Lutheran Church, Dover, DE

#### Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 656/657 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 262

**“A mighty fortress is our God”**

Without looking – which LSB hymn matches TLH? 656 or 657?

Hints:

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546, Composite Translation from the Pennsylvania Lutheran CHURCH BOOK of 1868" matches TLH.

One is "rhythmic" the other is "isorhythmic".

One has "goods, fame, child or wife" the other has "...?"

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (German: "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott") is one of the best known [hymns](#) by the [reformer Martin Luther](#), a prolific [hymnodist](#). Luther wrote the words and composed the [melody](#) sometime between 1527 and 1529.<sup>[1]</sup> It has been translated into English at least seventy times and also into many other languages.<sup>[1][2]</sup> The words are a paraphrase of [Psalm 46](#).<sup>[3]</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Mighty\\_Fortress\\_Is\\_Our\\_God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Mighty_Fortress_Is_Our_God)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M27DFH3ulh8> "This is Luther's original tune, known as the "rhythmic" tune. Seems like you hear the Bach tune all the time." (LSB 656)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTjmnGTs5fY> "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" from the Lutheran Service Book #657 with improvised introduction. (Isorhythmic)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUA-HGkYrMg> "Symphonic Meditation on "A Mighty Fortress" ("Ein' Feste Burg") for organ." [William Zeidler](#) (6 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCtD9O7hBnc> "Max Reger: Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott Op.27" (15 minutes)

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by  
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**Reformation Day observed: Revelation 14:6-7; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Deuteronomy 34:1-12 or Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 (Next Week :All Saints Day observed, Revelation 7:(2-8) 9-17; RCL, Revelation 7:9-17)**

*"...An eternal gospel to reclaim. An eternal gospel to proclaim. This picks up on the language of our first reading this morning, from the Book of Revelation, chapter 14, where it says: "Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim." This text from Revelation has long been appointed as a reading for Reformation Day, because in a certain sense Martin Luther was like that angel: a "messenger" used by God to sound forth the eternal gospel, loud and clear, at a time when the sound had grown muffled and unclear. Luther restored the proclamation of the gospel of Christ to its rightful prominence. Luther emphasized what the Bible teaches ..."* <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2016/10/eternal-gospel-reclaim-proclaim-sermon-revelation-146-7-romans-319-28-pr-charles-henrickson/>

### The Messages of the Three Angels

<sup>6</sup>Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. <sup>7</sup>And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.

The pericope is commonly appointed for the festival of the Reformation. The assignment has less to do with the fact that Martin Luther was regarded by some of his contemporaries as the first (or even third) angel of the apocalypse and more to do with the Reformation’s emphasis on the good news of the person and work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and on the distinction between law and gospel. The interpretation of the text should not be limited to Luther or the Reformation; more important than the reformer is the gospel message he proclaimed.

The text focuses on the appearance of the first angel and its message. Key to understanding the context here is to recall John’s vision of the dragon’s two beasts in chapter 13. The terrible beasts emerge from the sea and the earth respectively, and having been given the authority and power of the dragon, they make the earth their dwelling place. John’s vision continues in chapter 14 with the appearance of the lamb standing on Mount Zion together with the 144,000 who had been purchased from the earth. Then John sees the first angel flying in mid-heaven—between the sun and the earth—“having the eternal gospel to proclaim to those dwelling on the earth, people of every nation and tribe and language and people” (14:6).

The “eternal gospel” to be proclaimed is the good news that the angel, as God’s messenger, brings to all the inhabitants of the earth. But this good news is not limited to Christ’s work of saving the world from sin and death; it is a message speaking both law and gospel. In a mighty voice, the angel announces God’s imminent judgment, but also calls for the reverence of God as God and for a response to him as judge of the earth and as its creator. This preaching of the gospel to all nations is one of the signs of the end of the age as prophesied by Christ himself (cf. Mk 13:10). In Revelation, Christ’s work of salvation is completed, and now the work of judgment remains...

A final important feature of the text is found in the phrase, “eternal gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον, 14:6). This good news is not to be disconnected from God himself. God is an unchanging God (Mal 3:6), who is righteous and gracious. God’s word is an unchanging word, one that announces judgment as well as mercy. Indeed, God’s mercy does endure forever. He is faithful. He keeps his promises. This good news is also proclaimed with reference to the victorious lamb surrounding by the saints of God. The lamb, Jesus Christ, sent from God to the earth to redeem sinful humanity and restore the fallen creation, is God’s ultimate and eternal good news to the world. God redeems his fallen creatures through Christ so that he may restore them to himself. As his people they glorify and worship him as their God forever.”

<https://concordiatheology.org/2010/08/reformation-day-%E2%80%A2-revelation-146-7-%E2%80%A2-october-31-2010/> **Gerhard Bode**

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***Psalm 46; RCL, Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17 or Psalm 1(Psalm 149; RCL, Psalm 34:1-10,22)***

*"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" -- the hymn, which according to Ulrich Leupold, "more than any other epitomizes Luther's thought and personal experience" -- is a rather free paraphrase of Psalm 46.*

*For that reason, the psalm is assigned for Reformation Sunday. But as Leupold notes, Luther "did not write [the hymn] to express his own feelings, but to interpret and apply the 46th Psalm to the church of his own time and its struggles."<sup>1</sup> This is a fine summary of the preaching task -- to interpret and apply the biblical text to our own time and struggles. So why not preach this Reformation Day on Psalm 46?..."*

*(continued after the reading)*

**God Is Our Fortress**

***To the choirmaster. Of the Sons of Korah. According to Alamo<sup>[a]</sup>. A Song.***

46 God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present<sup>[b]</sup> help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,  
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. **Selah**

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;  
God will help her when morning dawns.

<sup>6</sup> The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. **Selah**

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD,  
how he has brought desolations on the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the chariots with fire.

<sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!"

<sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. **Selah**

- a. [Psalm 46:1](#) Probably a musical or liturgical term (or a reference to female voices)
- b. [Psalm 46:1](#) Or well proved

### “The Text of the Psalm

The psalm is tightly composed, with three, three-verse-long stanzas and two refrains:

Stanza 1 (verses 1-3)

Stanza 2 (verses 4-6)

Refrain: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (verse 7)

Stanza 3 (verses 8-10)

Refrain: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (verse 11)

An important note about the text of the psalm is necessary, because some recent modern editions of the Book of Psalm "restored" (a fancy scholarly term meaning "fussed with") the text of the psalm to include the psalm's refrain after the first stanza, too. The *Lutheran Book of Worship* of 1978 and *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1977 both used a version of this psalm with the refrain so restored.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, however, postmodern sensibilities have rightfully undermined scholarly confidence in the ability to fuss with the biblical text in these ways. So here is the point: Just be aware of which text your congregation is using. The commentary here does not supply the supposed missing verse. If you are still using a version that "restores" the refrain after the first stanza, adjust your interpretation accordingly..."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1110](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1110) [Rolf Jacobson](#)

Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn

#### Footnotes 2 and 3 provide some interesting detail

<sup>2</sup>This restoration to the psalm can be found in such important scholars as Hans-Joachim Kraus [Psalms 1-59 (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988) 458-9]. The argument is entirely internal, assuming that because the Hebrew word *selah* follows each of the three stanzas, the refrain should follow also. But here is no external textual support, either in ancient Hebrew manuscripts or among the ancient versions, for such a change to the psalm. If you read this footnote, you can now impress your colleagues in your text study. What does *selah* mean? Glad you asked. Nobody knows, but the best guess is that it was a musical or liturgical direction calling for some now unknown action to take place.

<sup>3</sup>For what it is worth, certain psalm scholars have argued that this psalm must have originated in some other city, since the mention of the river does not fit Jerusalem, and that the psalm was only "adopted" by Jerusalem. This argument misses the poetic power of the image of river and betrays a way of interpreting the Bible that is, in my view, hopelessly enslaved to a literalistic hermeneutic."

### **Romans 3:19-28; RCL, I Thessalonians 2:1-8 (1 John 3:1-3; RCL, the same reading)**

*"...Many churches will celebrate the Reformation this week.*

*Though Christians differ on some points of doctrine, most agree this is a great opportunity to lift up the biblical themes of God's grace and the liberating power of faith. A reading from Luther and a description of why he is important for the church would certainly be appropriate. Above all, it should be underlined that Luther and the other reformers did not claim to be saying something new.*

Rather they believed they were recovering a teaching from the Bible (and especially Paul) that had been obscured or ignored by the church of that time. Moreover, they stressed that the core message of Romans is always relevant, no matter how many years separate us from the sixteenth century. The age-old tendency of humans to justify themselves means the church must always be reformed -- and this includes the congregations that claim Luther as a father in the faith. And now we turn to this rich passage from Paul and select some themes that connect with the life of Christians today..."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1350](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1350) [Mark Tranvik](#)  
Professor of Religion, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN



<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being<sup>[a]</sup> will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

### The Righteousness of God Through Faith

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

- a. [Romans 3:20](#) Greek *flesh*

“How do we celebrate the Reformation? By believing in and caring about the same things that Luther and the Reformers believed in and cared about. And foremost in that list, I would put one word: Justification...And so our theme for this Reformation Day, “Justification: The Heart of the Reformation.”

First, though, I suppose we should ask: What is justification? Understand that this term “justification” is a legal term, referring to the courtroom of God’s justice and how we stand before him. Righteous or not righteous? That is the question...

The classic passage in the Bible on this subject is from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, the third chapter—our Epistle for this day—summed up in verse 28, “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”...

And so the law cannot save you. It can only convict you and condemn you, condemn you to death. But through this accusatory work, the law also does you the valuable service of showing you your sins. You see, you need to know that you cannot please God and earn salvation by how well you keep the law. You will never do it well enough! This is essential for you to know, so you don’t deceive yourself and delude yourself into thinking you can be righteous enough on your own. You need to be stripped bare of that pretension, so that your ears will be open to hear God’s other word to you, namely, the gospel, which is the only place where salvation can indeed be found.

That’s what Paul gets at next in Romans 3, and this right here is the heart of the gospel, Romans 3:21-28, the teaching of justification by faith in its most profound exposition...

And all this is a gift. It is all by grace, God’s undeserved favor, freely bestowed. It’s not a matter of your works; it’s a matter of Christ’s work for you. Redemption, salvation—or call it justification, the righteousness of God, your right standing before God—the thing is this: You can’t earn it. You can only receive it. Receive it as a gift...”

But when we grasp just how beautiful and central and life-giving this divine doctrine of justification is, that it is the very heart of the gospel—God’s gracious declaration of righteousness for Christ’s sake—then we will treasure this teaching. We will hold it dear, thank God for it, and let it permeate every aspect of the church’s life. And that is why we can say today, with joy and confidence, that justification is the heart of the Reformation.”

<https://stmatthewbt.org/2014/10/26/justification-the-heart-of-the-reformation-romans-319-28/> Rev. Charles Henrickson

## “The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 21st Chapter”

**John 8:31-36 or Matthew 11:12-19; RCL, Matthew 22:34-46** (*Matthew 5:1-12; RCL, the same reading*)

*“This pericope begins in an unusual way: “Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him...” (8:31).*

*It is not feasible to interpret this in the obvious way (that his listeners had faith in him as the messiah) because by the end of the story, Jesus says to them “I know you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me . . . .” (8:37).*

*Clearly, they do not believe in Jesus’ ministry or mission. John uses this description to distinguish these particular listeners from the disputatious Jews Jesus regularly encounters, as in the pericopes that precede this one. There, Jesus is being challenged and examined by Pharisees and scribes. Here, he seems to have a somewhat more open audience...”*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1064](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1064) [Clayton Schmit](#)  
Provost, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC

## John 8:31-36                      The Truth Will Set You Free

<sup>31</sup> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “**If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**” <sup>33</sup> They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave<sup>[a]</sup> to sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**”

- a. [John 8:34](#) For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface; also verse [35](#)

“When Martin Luther started the Reformation in 1517, what did he imagine that the church would look like when he was done? What was the goal toward which he was taking those who were willing to follow his lead? Was he simply reacting against things he thought were wrong? Or did he have a new vision of what the church could and should be?

Our Gospel lesson expresses what Martin Luther had in mind when he attacked the Pope and the doctrines of the Catholic church. Jesus said in [John 8:31](#), “**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, in a nutshell, is what the Reformation was all about, as far as Luther was concerned. Luther wanted the church to remain in Jesus’ word, without adding to, deleting from, or altering that Word, so that the church would be the **true** church, so that the church would know and proclaim the **truth**, and so that Christians would be **free** from sin and all its powers and effects...”  
<http://steadfastlutherans.org/2012/10/sermon-pr-martin-noland-john-831-36-reformation-day-observed/> Posted on [October 31, 2012](#) by [Pastor Martin Noland](#)

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## Matthew 11:12-19

*“When Jesus gets really angry I get interested. Perhaps it is because I am more moved when Jesus cries, laughs or shouts, when he acts like a human being. It tells me that underneath the lofty Gospel proclamations like “God from God, light from light, seated at the right hand of God, and of one being and substance with the Father” resides a passionate person who wants better for us, and is stung by criticism and apathy...*

*I wonder what these towns and villages that made Jesus so angry. I searched to find out about Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida to see if there was anything notorious about them. They were all nondescript little fishing villages in Galilee, the small villages where most of his disciples came from. Nothing in the Gospels points towards these villages being full of brothels, drugs, gangs, hedonists, Communists or devil worshipers. Apparently Jesus main complaint is that they were apathetic whiners. He had preached and healed, what Matthew called acts of power, and they were unmoved, going on about the business of catching fish. He compares them to children in the marketplace,...*

*Reading between the lines, it sounds like they didn't want the tough asceticism of John the Baptist, renouncing worldly pleasure, and they didn't want the lighter touch of Jesus, who welcomed everyone and hung out with sinners. They just wanted someone to bless them the way they are... Maybe they were hoping for a therapist to come and enhance their self-esteem rather than challenge them to change. It seems that apathy, indifference and a comfort level with the way things are bother Jesus. He is angry to the point of pronouncing great woe..." (continued after the reading)*

<sup>12</sup> From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,<sup>[a]</sup> and the violent take it by force. <sup>13</sup> For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, <sup>14</sup> and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. <sup>15</sup> He who has ears to hear,<sup>[b]</sup> let him hear.

<sup>16</sup> "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

<sup>17</sup> "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."<sup>[c]</sup>

- a. [Matthew 11:12](#) Or *has been coming violently*
- b. [Matthew 11:15](#) Some manuscripts omit *to hear*
- c. [Matthew 11:19](#) Some manuscripts *children* (compare [Luke 7:35](#))

### “This is the Gospel of the Lord”      “Praise to You, O Christ”

Michael Crichton, the screenwriter who mastered the science fiction thriller in *Jurassic Park*, *The Andromeda Strain*, *Congo*, *State of Fear*, sold over 150 million books trying to scare us regarding the perils coming at us from the future. In his book *The Lost World* he warned,

“...At a time when our behavior may well lead us to extinction, I see no reason to assume we have any awareness at all. We are stubborn, self-destructive conformists. Any other view of our species is just a self-congratulatory delusion.

My inkwell is poised to fire at the culprit, but if Crichton is correct, I might as well dump ink on my own head. We have a species-wide problem of not seeing the truth till it is too late.

I have never thrown an inkwell at the devil, as Martin Luther did on a very bad day. I hate to clean up a mess. My inky anger smudges my journal pages where the words sit safely between straight-ruled lines. When evil confronts me I tend to get cynical rather than hurling my favorite Pilot Gel pen at the perpetrator. After all, Gel pens are expensive. Maybe that is wimping out but at least I get the pens with a bold point (and occasionally I write one too.) I would like to get worked up and have some target practice with the devil, but the face of evil is often a taunting

apparition, as Luther found out. Evil often hides in banality, so I don't know where to aim. Evil seldom looks creepy or wears a black hat. The devil always puts the words "new and improved" on his toxic products. He caps his teeth, blow dries his hair, and hides in regulations, law suits, austerity plans and people just doing their job. When I don't know where to throw by missiles, I just get cynical instead. At least I can then feel sophisticated while being ineffective. In the end, I am tempted to the same kind of apathy and indifference as the people in Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida. The problems are too big, too complicated, other people don't seem to be as bothered as I am, so why don't I get on about my business and fish?

Do the ancient words of scriptures still have guidance for our 21st century challenges? Too often the Christian message for our time has been reduced to hoping things being better in heaven. Just hang in there and do the right thing because eternity will be worth it." <http://bloomingcactus.typepad.com/bloomingcactus/2011/06/matthew-1116-30-are-you-paying-attention-capernaum.html> **The Reverend Todd Weir**, "pastor at First Churches, Northampton writing about all things spiritual, looking for hope in tough times. Poughkeepsie, New York"

**"WE OBSERVE REFORMATION DAY, NOT BECAUSE LUTHERANS ARE BETTER, BUT WE OBSERVE IT FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL."**

<https://wmltblog.org/2013/11/why-reformation-romans-319-28/> *Herbert Mueller, LCMS First Vice President*

**I AM BOUND BY THE SCRIPTURES I HAVE QUOTED AND MY CONSCIENCE IS CAPTIVE TO THE WORD OF GOD. I CANNOT AND I WILL NOT RETRACT ANYTHING, SINCE IT IS NEITHER SAFE NOR RIGHT TO GO AGAINST CONSCIENCE. I CANNOT DO OTHERWISE, HERE I STAND, MAY GOD HELP ME, AMEN.**

**[Luther at the Diet of Worms (1521), LW 32:112–13]**

<https://lutheranreformation.org/>



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