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October 29<sup>th</sup> 2023

Romans 8: 28-39

Reformed and Always Reforming

Prayer...

Introduction:

On this Reformation Sunday, we remember the story of Martin Luther who on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517, posted 95 theses on the door of the Wittenberg All Saints Church in Germany. Martin Luther was an ordained Catholic Priest and held a doctorate from the University of Wittenberg, where he taught Biblical Studies. He was a priest and a scholar. His teachings challenged the existing Catholic Church's theological ideas, such as the selling of indulgences. Luther taught that salvation was a gift of grace through faith rather than based on works.

Two other theologians that became significant reformers were Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. Ulrich Zwingli was the most influential of the early Swiss Reformers. John Calvin was the most influential of the French reformers and became known for the community he formed in Geneva Switzerland. Calvin was viewed as the most significant of the second-generation reformers. He was a pastor who also governed the city of Geneva. He lived from 1509-1564. Calvin especially highlighted God's sovereignty and the gift of grace. John Knox who studied in Geneva returned to Scotland to start the Scottish Reformation. This movement eventually birthed the Presbyterian denomination.

So, our church here was founded in 1890 and was part of the Presbyterian church plants of that era. It has its roots in the Protestant Reformation. Today, is a special day for Protestant churches to remember our roots. I should also say that the Protestant Reformation helped influenced a Catholic Counter Reformation that also shaped the growth of the Catholic Church denomination.

There are a few key theological ideas of the Protestant Reformation.

- Salvation by grace alone through faith not works. Solo Gratia. Only Grace.
- Authority of Scripture. Solo Scriptura. Only Scripture.
- Priesthood of Believers

As many of you know, I grew up in the Presbyterian Church. My dad and mom became Presbyterian when we moved to Spokane when I was six years old. They taught together at that time at Whitworth College, a Presbyterian affiliated Christian University. When I was twelve, we moved to La Jolla, CA and my dad began working as a minister within the Presbyterian Church USA denomination. I returned to Whitworth for college and then moved to Seattle after college where my parents attended Bethany Presbyterian Church. While attending Bethany, I decided at the age of 26 to begin my process of being ordained in the Presbyterian Church. I attended seminary at Fuller Theological Seminary, which was known at the time for preparing many Presbyterians from the west coast who had more of an evangelical theology. Fuller was viewed by many as the Princeton Seminary of the West.

Today my dad Bruce Murphy and I helped lead some reflection on the reformation and the Presbyterian Church USA during our Adult Spiritual Formation class. It reminded me of a time when my dad and I together led a prayer retreat on grace at Whitworth University. We both shared our stories of grace and then students and other local Christians enjoyed a time of prayer and reflection on the beautiful campus of Whitworth.

For me grace reminds me of God's unconditional love. In Romans 8: 28-39, our Scripture reading today, we are reminded that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

- God works all things together for good for those who love God.
- God chooses us and God's purpose for us is to experience good things.
- God has a good plan for our lives.
- No condemnation in Jesus Christ.
- Christ intercedes for us. He is our mediator. He prays for us.
- Nothing can separate us from Christ.

37 No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Reformed and always reforming.

- Ecumenical- theological diversity- Evangelical, Contemplative, Charismatic, Social Justice, Holiness, and Incarnational traditions.
- Interfaith and Interspiritual- We are followers of Jesus who are open to learning from other religions and other faith perspectives.
- Original Sin and Original Grace, Human Nature as sinful or Human Nature as Inherent Goodness. Saint and Sinner.
- Social Justice and Inclusion: PCUSA denomination today affirms women in ordained ministry, egalitarian marriage, ordination of LGBTQ plus individuals and same gender marriage. We advocate for racial justice, peacemaking, economic development, and affordable housing.

Conclusion:

On this reformation Sunday, I want to suggest that Christianity is going through a new reformation. Many in the Christian community are working to develop a more compassionate Christianity that centers on a love revival where Jesus remains Lord and Savior, King of Kings, but also a close friend. Where God may be known as a Father, but also as a mother. Where Holy Spirit may also be known as the Sacred feminine presence of the Trinity who is comforter and guide. Where God's creation in nature can be a source of inspiration and wisdom even as we treasure the wisdom and authority of Scripture. Scripture in this new reformation will focus less on doctrinal division and more on inspiration for the purpose of deep intimate relationship with God. The New reformation will ultimately birth a missional outreach that invites people into deep intimacy with God and deep love of neighbor.

Reformed and always reforming. This is our call today as followers of Jesus. Will we be faithful to follow the new leading of the Holy Spirit in our time?

Let us pray...

## Romans 8:28-39

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

28 We know that all things work together[a] for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.[b] 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

### God's Love in Christ Jesus

31 What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? 33 Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? It is Christ[c] who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? 36 As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;

we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

37 No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.