

First Reading:
Revelation 14:6–7

⁶Then 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. ⁷And 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.”

Epistle: Romans 3:19–28

¹⁹Now 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. ²⁰For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption

that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom 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. ²⁶It 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.

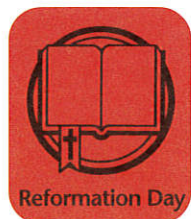
²⁷Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Holy Gospel: John 8:31–36

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

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

About the Cover: Martin Luther desired his seal to be a symbol of the firm footing we have in the Gospel. The black cross in the center of a living red heart signifies that Christ’s death brings us life. The flower blossoms like the joy and peace of faith in salvation, and the heavenly blue background points to future joy in eternity. It is all surrounded by the golden ring because salvation in Christ is eternal and our greatest treasure (*Luther’s Works*, vol. 49, pp. 358–59). In this common Lutheran symbol, we have a reminder of the heart of the Reformation: Christ’s cross brings us the eternal and priceless blessings of forgiveness, life, joy, and peace.



St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)

8948 N 1900 Ave Geneseo, IL 61254

815-989-2025

October 27, 2024

Reformation (observed)

Office of Matins (Lutheran Service Book, pg. 219)

Hymn of Invocation 555 Salvation unto Us Has Come (vv. 1-5)

Opening Versicles (Common, p. 219)

Venite (p. 220)

Psalm 46

¹God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

²**Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,**

³though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

⁴**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.**

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

⁶**The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.**

⁷The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

⁸**Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.**

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

¹⁰**“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”**

¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Office Hymn 656 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Readings (OT and Epistle on back of bulletin; Gospel follows)

Matthew 11:12-19

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

¹⁶“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

¹⁷ “ ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’

¹⁹The 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.”

Responsory (Common, p. 221)

Sermon

***Te Deum* (p. 223)**

Presentation of the Offering

Kyrie (p. 227)

Collect of the Day

P Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Prayer of the Church

After each petition:

P let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

The prayers conclude:

P ...one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

Collect for Grace (p. 228)

Benedicamus and Benediction

Closing Hymn 555 Salvation unto Us Has Come (vv. 6-10)

Silent Prayer

The Festival of the Reformation

The Festival of the Reformation is the only major celebration on the church calendar that commemorates a post-Biblical event. With the Reformation, we declare God's continuing control of, and acting within *history*. So here's a little history:

The Reformation of the Church began on October 31, 1517 when a young Augustinian monk and doctor of theology named Martin Luther (1483-1546) posted his "95 Theses" on the door to the castle church in Wittenberg. What was only meant to bring forth an academic debate on the sale of indulgences[†] proved to be the catalyst of an event that changed both church and state, being nothing short of God's intervention to restore the purity of His eternal Gospel to the Church after sinful people had clouded it over, and almost buried it under superstitions, human traditions, and works righteousness.

We must remember the three "*solas*" (alone) of the Reformation: 1) Grace Alone, 2) Faith Alone, and 3) Scripture Alone, all underscoring the Gospel truth of Christ Alone. It is God's *grace* (undeserved love) *alone* that led Him to send His only-begotten Son into human flesh to live, die, and rise again for us sinners. It is through *faith* (trust) in Christ *alone* that we receive the benefits of Jesus' atoning work: forgiveness of our sins, new spiritual life, and eternal salvation. And it is through *Scripture alone* that we hear God's demands and threats (Law), and His gracious promises to us in Christ Jesus (Gospel).

[†] Indulgences were an official church "release from time in purgatory" (a "place" of final *purging* of sin before a person can enter heaven). At the time of the Reformation, the money made from the sales in Germany was being sent to build a new church in Rome. Beyond the obvious sin of greed in this case, indulgences are completely unbiblical and are a blasphemous insult to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ Jesus, the Eternal Son of God.

Today the liturgical color is red, recognizing the connection between the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and the renewal of the Church by the Holy Spirit through God's Word during the Reformation. But to truly celebrate the Reformation properly, we must always be wary of anything that would draw us away from a simple faith in the Christ as revealed in His Word, but would instead direct us towards ourselves, whether our own thoughts, our feelings, or our works.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His Word, and for His raising up Dr. Martin Luther and his fellow reformers to restore God's Word in its truth and purity. By their work, and the continuing work of faithful believers since then, still today we continue to hear the pure Word of God so that we can have a pure faith in Christ, receiving what He won for us by His sacrifice on the cross.

God grant us boldness to keep the saving truth of the Reformation alive so that not only we, but also our children, grandchildren, and truly all people may continue to hear the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ and, through faith, receive the eternal benefits given therein.

Soli Deo Gloria!

(To God alone be all the glory!)





R.I. Circuit Youth Fall Service Project

Our next meeting is November 10 at Mt. Calvary in Galesburg.

We are going to collect items such as socks, hats and gloves; and canned fruits and vegetables to give to local pantries and shelters.

The congregation is more than welcomed to help. There will be a card table outside of the Youth Room to put your donations. We will take the items to Mt. Calvary and get them tagged with a Christian message before donating.



CHRISTIAN LIVING

A message from Bd. Of Stewardship & Evangelism
October 2024



Martin Luther had a lot to say about the love of God and man. Let's look at some of his thoughts.

Martin Luther could not find rest within his soul until he came to understand that God IS love, pure love, through Christ. This foundational truth is seen within all creation and in His relationship to man. God did not just create us and leave us to ourselves. It is His love that provides all our needs, protects us daily, and brings us back into a relationship with Him through Christ. There can be nothing less from this kind of love. We deserved none of this. All is truly a FREE gift.

The love of the world comes with expectations and restrictions. Man's ability to show true love comes directly from God as a response to His infinite and perfect love. His love moves us, with gratitude, to reach out to our fellow man. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. ***"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." John 15:12.***

With this understanding, may we eagerly seek to serve the needs of our brothers and sisters, not only to meet their physical needs, but to share Christ for their eternal life.

"Genuine, divine, full and perfect love is the kind that excludes no one, that is not partial or selective but freely goes out to all."

Martin Luther



CAST AN INFORMED VOTE – PLEASE

Suppose the unthinkable happened and your child needed a specialized lifesaving surgery. How would you choose the surgeon? Would you choose the first one in the listing? Search the Internet? Rely on social media? Or would you ask questions, do research, check credentials, and talk to trusted friends with knowledge of the surgeon's skill? What if you found out that the surgeon was the top rated one in the area, but had a terrible bedside manner?

What about casting your vote this year? Will you cast your precious vote based on rumors, innuendo, political ads, and gut feelings? Or will you take a few minutes to research the candidate, proposition, or amendment?

The Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty offers the following suggestions when deciding to vote for a candidate, proposition, or amendment.

Will my vote:

- Strengthen and limit a Constitutional government?
- Preserve the sanctity of life?
- Provide educational choice for parents for their children?
- Protect the Church's doctrine and practice of sexual identity and marriage?
- Defend the Republic from secular socialism and statism?

The Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty suggests that you review the stated platforms of the two political parties in order to cast an informed vote. In other words, we suggest you vote policies and not personalities.

You can read the official platforms at:

Democratic Party Platform: https://democrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_Democratic_Party_Platform_8a2cf8.pdf

Republican Party Platform: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/2024-republican-party-platform>

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-LCMS

churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org
Website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org
https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo

**HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE**

Rev. Timothy Nerud **Pastor**
815-989-2025 (Office) 612-940-8138 (Cell)

Elder: Aaron Raschke

Greeter: Janet Bertsos

Videographers: Joel Werling, Nicole Nerud, or Heidi Nerud

WE PRAY: Ascended Lord, who as Word came to dwell among us, that we might know the love of the Father, lead us ever deeper into the Scriptures—under the blessed guidance of the Holy Spirit—that we learn again and again of the freedom from sin and the Law that Your Gospel has brought us, and that we increase more and more in the life lived to Your Glory through willing service to our fellowman; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit are one God with dominion over us forever. Amen

WELCOME TO ALL!

We are anxious to share with you the Christ-centered ministry at St. John's. Our Liturgy follows closely the pattern of Word and Lord's Supper handed down from the ancient Church. It is our hope that you will make the Church's life of prayer your own. If you have difficulty following our order of service, please ask someone sitting near you for assistance. We pray that you will receive rich spiritual blessings from your presence here. May the peace and power of our risen Christ be yours always.

OFFICE HOURS

Terri's hours (Monday—Friday, please call ahead) 8 am—12 pm
Pastor's hours (Monday, Pastor's day off)
(Tuesday— Friday) please call ahead

STREAM SERVICES <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> and on the website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org.

DAILY DEVOTIONS FROM LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES - use this website (www.lhm.org) to receive daily devotions sent to your email or phone. You never have to be without God's word.

All bulletin announcements need to be in the Office by Wednesday mornings.

ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY

Sunday school—8 Adult Bible Class—5 Worship—46

OFFERING

Offering last Sunday \$3,380.00
Weekly giving needed per 2024 Budget \$4,481.54

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AT ST JOHN'S

Today	8:45 am	SS, Adult/Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship
	11:00 am	Quarterly Voters' meeting
Next Sunday	8:45 am	SS, Adult/Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship/Holy Communion
	11:30 am	Elders' meeting

*I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."
Psalms 122:1*

ROMANS 3:20 – “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” The Law of God is good — it's just that we sinners cannot save ourselves by the Law. Salvation is a free gift of God because that is the only way we could ever be saved. The Law shows us God's holiness and thus our own sin. And now in Christ we can look at the Law and see it in a new light as well: as a guide for how to live a godly life in thanksgiving to God for His gracious forgiveness in Christ.

ATTENDANCE BOOK—We ask everyone attending this morning to sign the red attendance book found at the end of each pew, then pass it back.

SPECIAL COLLECTION—Next Sunday is the last day we will collect monetary donations for those affected by the hurricanes in Florida. Please put your gifts in the offering plate on the table in the center of the Narthex. Make checks out to 'St. John's Lutheran Church' with the word hurricane in the memo. It has been brought to my attention that Thrivent will give a dollar for every two given through the Thrivent website. We will try and utilize this opportunity for added funds.

THANKSGIVING FOOD BASKETS—We are gathering pantry items for those in need. We currently have the names of 3 families. If you know of a family needing help, please contact the Office. We are for bring pantry items of food, paper products, cleaning supplies, etc. to create a 'Thanksgiving Box' for each family. Monetary gift are also welcomed. Bring your gifts by November 10th and place on the table outside the Office door. Thank You!!!!

ROCK ISLAND CIRCUIT YOUTH is gathering socks, hats , gloves, along with canned fruits and vegetables. Bring your gifts by November 10th and place them in the box outside the Office door.

LIFE THOUGHTS—God would have us forgive each other “from your heart” (Matthew 18:35). When terrible sins are involved, such as abuse or incest, it is no easy matter to forgive—maybe it even seems impossible. The same is true when trying to forgive ourselves when we have committed some horrible sin, like abortion, for example. The starting point for forgiveness in all situations is not what we should do but what God in Christ has done for us. Only His complete forgiveness can give us peace as we strive to forgive others and ourselves. *Prayer: Father, forgive our many sins for Jesus’ sake and give us opportunity to share this forgiveness freely with others. Amen.*

ALL SAINTS DAY - TODAY is the last day to add a name for a cross for loved one who has joined the Church Triumphant.

DOLLAR FOR MISSIONS: The current Dollar for Missions project is for replacement of furnaces at Immanuel Lutheran Student Center, Macomb, which is expected to cost some \$25,000. The Student Center was built 55 years ago. Equipment replacement like this is important so the Gospel can continue to be proclaimed and students can go on being reached there for years into the future. For more information visit <https://www.cidlcms.org/ministry-dfm-current-project.html>. **(Thank you to those at St. John’s who consistently support the work of Missions on the District and Synodical level. You are a blessing!)**

ALTAR FLOWERS—The 2023 Flower Chart is now on the bulletin board next to the restrooms. Cost for weekly flowers are \$30 for two arrangements. We greatly appreciate those who help with providing flowers for Sunday worship services. **Please sign up for a Sunday.**

PRAYER MINISTRY

Remember God’s gift of Baptism as you pray:

MISSION—*Pray for those who do not belong to the Church, that God would call all to faith.*

ST JOHN’S—Mr. & Mrs. Joel Goetz—We offer before You our common request for the well-being of Your church throughout the world that it may be so guided and governed by Your good Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace, and the righteousness of life. Specifically, we pray for Joel and Susan asking Your blessings upon them.

ST. JOHN’S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy to Your servants:

Elizabeth Bjork	Paula Chapa	Joyce DeFauw
Betty Firch	Arlyn Helke	Jessica Johnson
Lynne Johnson	Linda Lundquist	Aaron Raschke
Drew Schillinger	Carolyn Wildermuth	Marilyn Woods
Dawn Daebellienn		

Brandon & Shaeli Streeks & family (Adopted Seminarian)

Jon/Anita Clausing (missionaries in Kenya)

Don Eggers (son of friend of Marilyn Woods)

Jodi Martins (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)

Shandel Loenser

Paul Werner (brother of Dan Werner)

Ron Powell (friend of Brad Gehn)

Justin Rittenhouse (grandson of John/Nancy Wickwire)

Marty Cavato (cousin of Mary Jo Gehn)

Ellen Bauer (grandmother of Joel Werling)

Don Lutz (husband of an LWML friend of Liz Neumann)

Carol Eggers (friend of Marilyn Woods)

Gary Kilstom (friend of Brad Gehn)

Kenneth Cullison (son of Kevin and Stacie Rahn)

MILITARY—We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

Mandy Davila (daughter of Linda Aper)

Luke/Nicole Thompson (son/daughter-in-law of John/Kindra Thompson)

Karl Flynn (son of Mr/Mrs Paul Flynn)

Casey Powers Jr. (step son of Lisa Powers)

Brittany Loenser (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

Rylie Hallendorff (grand-daughter of Carolyn & Dan Werner)

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

“Do not doubt, dear sister, dear brother, in the midst of your piercing grief, that you are not alone. Jesus stands with you and the whole company of His heaven stands with you, God’s gang, you might say. So stand firm with God as your mighty fortress, for you are not alone. But the ‘same kinds of suffering you are experiencing are being experienced by your sisters and brothers throughout the world,’ 1 Peter tells us. Yes, the people who are mourning are blessed because they will be comforted.” *Rev. Dr. John Nunes, guest speaker on “The Lutheran Hour” – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

GENESEO INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM invites you to participate in the Thanksgiving program November 27—December 1. Willing hosts will invite international college students into their homes for the Thanksgiving holiday. The guest will arrive in Geneseo by bus approximately 3:45 on Wednesday, November 27. They depart from Geneseo at 2 pm December 1. This is a wonderful opportunity to show the love of Christ to a stranger. For more details, contact the church office ASAP. Application deadline is November 11.

THE COMMUNITY CHOIR has been invited to sing at the Community Thanksgiving service in the HS Fine Arts Commons on Sunday, Nov. 24. Rehearsal begins at 3:00 in the HS choir room and the service begins at 4:00. We will sing "Hymn to Joy" (Comm. choir sang this summer) and "Cantate Domino" by Althouse.

Please reply to Pam Edwards (singplay53@gmail.com) by Oct. 31. All are welcome to join us!

Reformation Day (observed)

October 27, 2024

Text: Matthew 11:12-19 (Gospel, alternate)

Other Texts: Revelation 14:6-7 (First Reading); Romans 3:19-28 (Epistle)

“The Kingdom Suffers Violence but Still Remains (Ours!)”

Grace, mercy and peace be yours from God our Father through faith in the Lord Jesus

Christ.

“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.” The kingdom of heaven, the reign and rule of God in Christ Jesus. As the text refers to suffering violence and the violent taking it by force, we see that this kingdom is neither the Lord’s absolute rule over all of creation (kingdom of power) nor His rule over the saints and angels in heaven (kingdom of glory), as the violent cannot oppose these.

But what then do Jesus’ words mean, to what is He referring when He says, “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force”? Interestingly, these words have been interpreted in various ways throughout Church history and this morning we will consider a few of these as they can all be of value to us.

Many early Christians understood our Lord to mean that believers had to be violent people. Of course, not in the sense of hurting others as the Fifth Commandment not only forbids us from hurting our neighbor, but calls us to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us, and to forgive those who sin against us even as God in Christ has forgiven us, that is, freely and fully. No, this referred to a different violence: violence *against the sinful nature*. It is putting to death the deeds of the body, crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires, denying oneself, taking up the cross and losing our life for the sake of Christ and the Gospel so that we gain life in Him now and forever. And certainly this is a real and necessary battle for the believer to engage in since the Holy Scriptures command this violence and a failure to carry out this fight will allow the sinful nature to take control once again, destroying the precious gift of saving faith in Christ.

Enlightened and empowered by the Holy Spirit, may we follow this necessary command: to fight zealously, yes, *violently* against our sinful nature. Doing so that we may glorify God by giving a strong witness before others of our loyalty to Christ and the great importance that His sacrifice *for* us, truly *is to us*. Doing so to keep us from losing our justifying faith because of falling back into sin, but instead being refined by God through this battle unto greater virtue, made ready for increasing service in His kingdom.

Another interpretation is that Jesus is speaking of the ongoing victories of the kingdom of heaven as it advances here on earth. Following Jesus’ words “From the days of John the

Baptist until now,” we are reminded that the kingdom of heaven was being advanced as never before by John’s powerful preaching of repentance and, even more, Jesus’ own mighty ministry of preaching, teaching and miracles. An advancement that continues through the mission of the Church as she goes forth carrying out the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations.

And the Bible teaches this truth. For certainly the risen, ascended and glorified Christ Jesus has the sharp two-edged sword of the Word coming forth from His mouth as John saw in Revelation, which is the same living and active Word of God which the Church’s ministers preach and each of her members take up as part of the armor of God to speak within our own various callings and vocations. The sword that cuts, dividing even soul and spirit. Cutting our self-righteousness to pieces as we see our sins and sinful nature revealed in the light of God’s Law. The sword that swings back again with the second edge, cutting the devil’s claim on us because of our sins, slicing the guilt over our sins that like a spider web would entrap our conscience and would bind us in despair, for what sin can condemn us when Jesus has paid for them in full!

And so with the mighty sword of the Spirit of Christ, a violent assault upon the devil’s kingdom of darkness is launched as those trapped within it through unbelief, who are bound in Satan’s chains by slavery to sin, are rescued, freed, and then armed and armored as a Christian soldier to themselves fight, bringing that same Word that saved them to ever more people. And so we, fully forgiven our sins, are such freed prisoners and are now called to bring violence upon Satan and his kingdom by bringing that justifying, freeing saving Gospel Word to others!

A final interpretation for us to consider this morning is the kingdom of heaven actually suffering violence and violent men truly taking it by force. It is interesting how, throughout the ages, this particular interpretation, which would seem to take the literal sense of the text, is not as common. Perhaps it is because of a misunderstanding of the kingdom of heaven, thinking of the rule of God in view either of His omnipotence or His glory and thereby, rightly, saying that such cannot be acted upon violently as we mentioned earlier. But it seems that for many, the very idea of God being resisted at all in any way is just impossible and so they interpret accordingly.

And we get it, don’t we? We have that same knee-jerk reaction. It is shocking that God’s reign and rule can, at least in some cases, be resisted, that in some manner and sense, evil people can bring to naught God’s work and will. But is this not what Scripture has taught since Genesis 3? After all, was it truly God’s will that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? What then does that make of His command to not eat it? Again, are our breaking of any of God’s commandments actually what He wants? Clearly such is not the case, which then means that, while God is working in grace, when Christ is ruling in a lowly, humble way, as the Holy Spirit is working through means (the Word and Sacraments), His good and gracious will *can be resisted*. And sadly, it often is.

As we mentioned previously, God’s will is sadly resisted even by believers when we fail

to fully oppose the devil's temptations, the lies and guiles of the world, and our own sinful, selfish desires, but instead dally with them, contesting God's will, His rule over us even to our own harm. And certainly God's will is resisted when people hear the Word that would advance the kingdom of heaven into their hearts but then refuse to repent and believe in Christ, and thereby resist His saving will. And at least some will go so far to not only resist God's working in their soul, but then attack the Word and the Church which speaks it, oppressing believers in various ways, from personal snubbing and cruelty, to social and cultural attacks, even unto officially sanctioned persecution, with the whole spectrum in between at least possible.

Violent men have always opposed God's will. Cain killed Abel. The prophets of old were often ignored, despised, persecuted, even killed. John the Baptist was beheaded. Christ Jesus, the very King of the kingdom, was "honored" with insults, spits, and blows, crowned with thorns, and enthroned upon a murderous instrument of torture, the cross. The apostles, all persecuted, all but one martyred. Martyrs and confessors throughout the ages suffering for the Gospel, Cyprian executed by the Romans, Martin Luther put under the death sentence and so could no longer travel freely. Believers from the earliest days unto now follow in their train, bearing the cross, suffering for their faithful confession of Christ as some do in our country, perhaps even unto death as some do in Muslim, communist, and other lands, all because the world, ruled by Satan, resists the true King.

Yet, while paradoxically, this list of suffering confessors and martyrs, is actually a comfort and encouragement. After all, beyond the promise of our Baptism, what could better assure us that we are Christians *than suffering for Christ*? For certainly one whose faith is but an illusion, a mere empty confession, will quickly show their hypocrisy when called to suffer as a believer. On the flipside, one who is willing to endure such suffering, to bear that cross, not only proves themselves a faithful believer, but will actually have their faith, being tested by trial, strengthened as God promises, and as hurting, grieving Christians from the early church on have confessed to be true as they were being conformed to the image of Christ.

John the Baptist, the prophets and apostles, martyrs and confessors throughout the ages, all testified before the world by their words, their lives and, if called to do such, by their deaths as violent men would take the kingdom by force. They did not choose this; they did not seek it out. But when called to do such they bravely faced whatever necessary. They did this because they were made strong in the One who made them strong. The One who forgave them all their sins, who opened heaven's gates, and who would never let them go. The One who would make suffering strengthen them and death serve them by being the gate home. The One who on the Last Day will no longer suffer resistance, but will vindicate His people by throwing the evilly violent into the lake of fire and bring His people into everlasting glory, the glory He won by His suffering and death for them. That One who is Christ Jesus, who has also done all this *for you!*

"Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds." Jesus is the wisdom of God and so He is our wisdom. God the Father regarded His holy life as fulfilling the divine Law for you,

covering you in Christ's perfect righteousness, even as He accepts Jesus' innocent suffering and death for your sins in your place. When you hear and believe God's Word, you are forgiven all your sins, justified, declared righteous, by this faith in Christ alone. Your status with God is sure and certain through faith in Jesus. Therefore, come what may, even violence against you as you confess the faith through word and deed, you are secure in Christ Jesus, *the kingdom yours remaineth*. Amen!

**Reformation Day
31 October 2024**

Presentation of the Offering

Dear Lord Jesus, accept our offerings and use it to preach the Gospel where we in person cannot go. With hearts united we ask You to bless the labors of Your Gospel ambassadors everywhere. Give to the missionaries, pastors, professional church workers, and lay-workers zeal and courage; and to the people among whom they labor give open hearts and ears that hear in faith. May our love for You cause us to give generous gifts as we recognize it is both a duty and privilege to do so. Amen.

Collect of the Day

Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Prayer of the Church—Ektene Form

For thankful and steadfast hearts to receive God's Word, that He would enable us to keep it and bring forth its good fruit in our lives, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For God's goodness and tender care, especially on this Reformation festival, in thanksgiving for Christ, the revelation of His holy will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For faithful hearts, that we would remain steadfast in the Word of God and never follow false gospels that lead us away from His truth; and for pastors who will preach with purity and joy that we are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For every Christian household, that we would be constant in the holy sacrifices of crucifying our sinful desires, prayer, and selfless service and good works, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

That God would strike down every hostile and haughty opponent who strike out against the cries and prayers of His faithful people; that those who lead our land would use the power entrusted to them for the preservation of order, the accomplishment of justice, the protection of life and the defense of the weak; and that He would raise up godly and faithful leaders who will follow the Lord's commands, serve with integrity, and let the Gospel be freely proclaimed, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the gift of healing in this life, especially that given to Clint, we thank You Lord. For all who face adversity of any kind, especially Ellen, Elizabeth, Marty, Paula, Kenneth, Dawn, Joyce, Carol, Don, Betty, Arlyn, Jessica, Lynne, Gary, Shandel, Linda, Don, Jodi,

Ron, Aaron, Justin, Drew, Paul, Carolyn, and Marilyn, that our God would comfort them by His Holy Spirit, and that they would acknowledge their afflictions as the manifestation of His fatherly will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For Joel and Susan Goetz, that our heavenly Father would bless them in body and soul with all things needful for this life and eternity, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Preserve Your Church, O Lord, and each of us as members of Christ's Body, that we may not surrender the true Gospel for any reason, but be kept in this faith and fear throughout the days of our earthly pilgrimage, until that day when we and all Your people shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the reward You have prepared for us and all who have loved His appearing; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Collect for Grace