

**“A Reforming Spirit”**  
**Reformation Sunday – 10.28.18 – Jn 8:31-36; Mk 10:46-52**

**Poor Bartimaeus.** *Blind.* Remembered only because Jesus restored his sight and then never seen again, save in the 3 year cycle of Bible readings. Since the 1500’s, even that memory is lost in Lutheran churches who opt for the readings appointed for Reformation Sunday. Poor Bartimaeus. I feel bad for him, especially because he is the poster child for a life-changing encounter with God – exactly what we, too, are seeking – and we skip him. Poor us.

**So let’s hold on to Bartimaeus’ story and place it beside two others,** making the jump from Mark to John, and from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Consider, **a young Galilean rabbi** who spoke to a crowd of Jewish “seekers” at the Temple in Jerusalem,

As he looks into his own future that is leading to a cross, he says,  
“You will know the Truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Jesus was setting free a kind of faith they hadn’t known:

Not a life-conforming faith, full of rules and laws  
but a life-changing faith, full of love and mercy...

Or, consider **a monk, a young German professor,** who spoke to a tribunal of German philosophers and representatives of the RCC,

As he looks into his own future, leading to a different end. He says,  
“Here I stand. I can do no other. So help me God.”

Luther was setting free a kind of faith they hadn’t known

Not a life-conforming faith, full of indulgences/papal rules  
But a life-changing faith: *a living, daring confidence in God’s grace.*

Martin Luther found the truth of Jesus; the truth that set him free to be. Later, Christian author Henri Nouwen would write, “*Your truth becomes your call.*”

**Today I want to challenge our 17 Confirmands AND all of you:** What is your truth, and what call has come from that truth in your life? But, (as Pilate asked Jesus in the last day of his life,) *What is truth?* Is it just facts and data, or is truth bigger than that? Please note, my question for you is not what **is** truth, but what is **your** truth? What have you received from others that has **stuck** through your life?

You’ve heard me imagine the **Patchwork Quilt** of your faith. Some squares came from grandma or a youth director or pastor, from a camp counselor or coach, or parents, neighbors, friends or even enemies. Some square last for a lifetime, and keep you warm. Others wear out over time, and need replacing. That’s when the Spirit is re-forming your faith quilt, knitting squares together and adding in your experiences. Faith is a process of finding the Truth that is in you, that was planted to grow in the waters of your baptism. You know it when you feel it. You discover it, sometimes, when you least expect it. You carry it with you, until something or someone changes you with a reformed truth. That’s what happens to the Wicked Witch of the West in **Wicked**, as she tries to find her own truth. She sings, *Something has changed within me; something is not the same. I’m through with playing by the rules of someone else’s game.* When that time comes for you – what are the rules for your game? How might the Spirit be re-forming what God started in your baptism?

**Last week our Sunday School kids sang, “I am a C(hristian).”** You do not have to be an adult to sing or speak the truth of believing in Jesus. The Truth of following Jesus is your call!

Being a Christian is to have an opportunity every day to share, and to be a model of the alternatives for what the world says about:

**Relationships** - how they should look and with whom you can share one

**Values** - what is important and what is right to you, your faith and your loved ones

**Choices** - who gets to make them and why do they get to have the choices they have

**Power** - and what it's really worth in the end.

We are called by God's reforming Spirit to be **in** the world, but not **of** the world. We are to show the world a different way to be, and here's a lovely servant image for this week: Let's start to see ourselves as "hosts" for one another's pain and one who values someone else's experience of anxiety, or fear, or grief. When that Reforming Spirit grabs hold of you and whispers to your heart, The Truth will be **you**, coming out of yourself, for someone else. Some would call that love. God would call that Good. Very Good.

**After his encounter with Jesus**, Bartimaeus was told, *"Go, your faith has made you well...immediately he regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way."* Even though Jesus told him to go, something had changed in Bartimaeus. Regaining his sight revealed his truth: Jesus **was** the Son of God – so instead of going his own way, he followed his truth. Bartimaeus followed The Truth.

The German Lutheranism we've known is moving out into the world. What we retain is the mission of bringing truth with us – wearing it on our bodies, holding it in our hands and in our hearts – speaking the truth in love against the fear and greed of this world. It's time to stop wringing our hands; time to start speaking the truth. You possess a Reforming Spirit. So, stand up, speak out! Set free the truth in you. **Your** truth, by the grace of God. Amen.

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Reformation Sunday/the Day of Confirmation

**Resources:** Anna Carter Florence, Bishop's Convocation 2018; Faith Lens