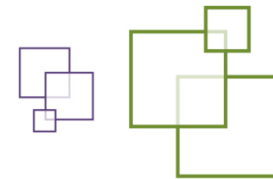


NEW VOICES



**OF THE
REFORMATION**

Introduction

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany in order to spark scholarly debate about topics which challenged the practices of the Catholic Church, such as the selling of indulgences. Luther's 95 theses however caught the eye of many, due in part to the fact that the printing press had just been invented and someone took it upon themselves to print the document and distribute it around Germany. It also reached the leaders of the church, and with that, a spark for the Reformation was lit.

There have been countless books written on Luther and the Reformation over the centuries; however, as we soon approach the 500th anniversary of the posting of the 95 Theses, we find that a new wave of scholarship has taken place over the last 50 years. For previous to these last 50 years, the majority of research in relation to the Reformation has reflected the views and works of the male reformers such as Luther. Yet new research has uncovered many other voices from the time of the Reformation. More and more is being discovered about how the common man viewed life and faith at that time. The voices of women are starting to be heard, as this half of the population was very much voiceless in many arenas of work. The voices of children from that time are giving us a new perspective on what family life and childhood were like for most people during the 1500's. And while the voices of the pope and clergy

were essentially the voice of the church at that time, the voices of the laity are now being unearthed. Research from this time also focused primarily on how the Reformation affected Christians of the time, and now there is a movement to hear the voices of the outsiders in the community who were living in the midst of this conflicted church community. Even the voice of Luther himself it seems has more to say, which goes beyond the reputation that has been built for him for so many years. And finally the voice of love is now shining forth as a new perspective on Reformation theology.

One of the hallmarks of the Lutheran Church is that at its best it is a church that is a reforming church, that is, it is a church which continues throughout history to look at itself and see ways in which it can continue to make its teachings and practices more faithful. This new scholarship on the Reformation is a great example of this. Yet reforms do no good unless they are put into practice, unless, like the 95 Theses, they are shared in order that others might join in the conversation and claim it as their own. As a result, "*New Voices of the Reformation...and how they speak to us today*" was created not only to allow those within congregations to know of these new voices from the past, but to also remind us as we continue to be a reforming church in the future, to listen to all the voices that gather around the table .

- *The Rev. Kari B. Smail*

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Session 1: The Voice of the Common Man

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, we pray to you, knowing that you hear our prayers. As we begin this study on the new voices of the Reformation, help us to hear the voices of those, such as the common man, who have long been silent, in order that we might be reminded to be open to hearing the voices of today as well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Discussion Point:

Name some times in history when the voice of the common man has made a difference when it has been heard.

Background:

So much of what we know of the Reformation comes primarily from the reformers of the day, such as Martin Luther. And while all of this knowledge is wonderful and very important, it still leaves us with a singular perspective on this time in history. As a result, it causes one to ponder what everyone else from the time of the Reformation was thinking and doing while the church was in a time of turmoil and transition. The church played a prominent role in life and society at that time, so the

effects of the Reformation would have been felt by everyone on some level.

We begin by looking at the voice of the common man, in order to begin to balance the traditional male voice of the educated clergy.

One of the first things that changed for the common man during the Reformation was the increased responsibility for leading family devotions and catechetical instruction. Fathers were considered in a sense to be their family's pastor, to lead the prayers and singing of psalms each day and to ensure that their children were being educated in the faith. Much of this empowerment was possible due to the fact that the Word was now accessible to the common man, as the Bible had been translated into the common tongue, as well as the fact that the printing press made it possible for each home to own a copy of the Bible and a copy of a book of Psalms from which to sing.

And while the Reformation changed many things in the lives of the people, in terms of gender roles, much remained the same. For when a group from the church was deciding on a new pastor, it was the men who still were the only ones who were able to vote. It was also the men who were the only ones who could be pastors or elders in the church, and they were the ones who participated in annual oath swearing. It was also the men who determined the denominational affiliation of their wives and families, for the women were expected to conform to their husband's faith.

Biblical Texts:

(Please note: All Biblical texts in this booklet are taken from the NRSV translation of the Bible.)

Deuteronomy 11:18-19

¹⁸You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead.¹⁹Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

Psalms 78

¹Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
²I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
³things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.
⁴We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds
of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.
⁵He established a decree in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children;
⁶that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up and tell them to their children,
⁷so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

Ephesians 5:21-27

²¹Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.²²Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord.²³For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.²⁴Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,²⁶in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word,²⁷so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.

1 Corinthians 14:30-35

³⁰If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent.³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged.³²And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets,³³for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. (As in all the churches of the saints,³⁴women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says.³⁵If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.)

Questions to ponder...

- What difference do you think it made that during the Reformation the common man was now called to teach the faith at home, and that the Word was accessible to everyone in the house with the printing of the Bible?

- Why do you think that gender roles remained the same during the time of the Reformation when so much else was being reconsidered?
- How would we understand the texts of Ephesians 5:21-27 and 1 Corinthians 14:30-35 today?

Hymn: ELW #812 – *Faith of Our Fathers*

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for the saints of old who were faithful to your Word. Especially this day we remember the common man from the Reformation era who began to intentionally teach the faith and read the Bible and sing the Psalms at home so that his children and family might know Christ in their everyday lives. As we remember his witness, help us to be inspired to teach those we love the faith as well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

References and additional sources for further study:

- Mentzer, Raymond A. *The Piety of Townspeople and City Folk*. Edited by Peter Matheson. *Reformation Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. *Women and Men, Together and Apart*. Edited by Peter Matheson. *Reformation Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Session 2: The Many Voices of Women

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, we give you thanks for all the voices of past and present who continue to proclaim the Good News to all the world. Especially this day we lift in thanksgiving before you the women of the Reformation who were creative in finding ways to make their voices known so that their proclamation might be counted among the faithful. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Discussion Point:

Talk about a time where you had to be creative in making your voice made known, or about a time in history when this has happened to a certain group of people.

Background:

While gender roles within the home did not change during the time of the Reformation, this period in history did have an effect on women's lives, and it was not always seen as a positive one from the perspective of the women themselves. You see, as a result of the Reformation the only calling that a woman could really have was to be a wife, while prior to the Reformation women had the option of becoming a nun.

During this time cloistered life was actually seen as unfaithful, as it closed nuns off from the world in which they were to live their faith. As a result, convents were slowly closed down in

order to make all women live in the midst of society. And the only viable way for women to survive in society was if they married.

With marriage came a slightly new role for women in that some were now able to marry the pastors of the church, at least those that were in the protestant churches. These women had extra duties as a result of their husband's calling, as their homes were not just for their families, but for their church families as well, becoming a kind of gathering place of sorts. They also had to set a good example of what a Christian home was like, especially when trying to recover from the many bad examples that were set by priests who had affairs and illegitimate children.

Another thing that was altered for women during the Reformation was how they dealt with giving birth. For prior to this time women would call on the saints to help them during childbirth. Now the only one that they could call on for help was Jesus or the Trinity. This was a difficult transition for some, as they were not used to praying directly to God, and they were also superstitious about their practices and wanted to do anything they could to ensure a successful delivery.

Education and proclamation were difficult things for women as they were expected to be submissive and domestic and not learned and outspoken. Thankfully however, with the closing of convents, Luther advocated for the creation of maiden schools where women could go and get an education in not just the traditional topics of a woman's role in the home, but also for such things as music and math. This allowed for more than just the extreme wealthy women to have access to an education.

To find a venue for proclamation however was a little harder, and for this women had to be a bit creative. Prior to the Reformation women could justify their writings through mystical experiences, however during the Reformation these experiences were not looked well upon. As a result, women called on the one thing that they had as justification, their role as a mother and thus their task of nurturing not only their own offspring, but all of the offspring of the church as a kind of church mother. Or other times women would write letters, with the intent that they would hopefully be published. So essentially if a woman had something to say, she found a creative way to make her voice made known. Today there are several women voices from the Reformation that are being unearthed and published, adding to the chorus of faithful proclamation.

Biblical Texts:

Psalm 148:7-12

⁷Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
⁸fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!
⁹Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!
¹⁰Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!
¹¹Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
¹²Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Proverbs 31:10-31

¹⁰A capable wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.
¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
¹²She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

¹³She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.
¹⁴She is like the ships of the merchant,
she brings her food from far away.
¹⁵She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household
and tasks for her servant-girls.
¹⁶She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
¹⁷She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong.
¹⁸She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
¹⁹She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.
²⁰She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
²¹She is not afraid for her household when it snows,
for all her household are clothed in crimson.
²²She makes herself coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple.
²³Her husband is known in the city gates,
taking his seat among the elders of the land.
²⁴She makes linen garments and sells them;
she supplies the merchant with sashes.
²⁵Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
²⁶She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
²⁷She looks well to the ways of her household,
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
²⁸Her children rise up and call her happy;
her husband too, and he praises her:
²⁹“Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.”
³⁰Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
³¹Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the city gates.

Matthew 15:22-28

²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.'²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.'²⁴He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.'²⁶He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.'²⁷She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.'²⁸Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

John 20:10-18

¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Questions to ponder...

- Do you view cloistered life as faithful or unfaithful? Why/why not?
- Do you think there is the same expectation to be a good role model placed upon clergy spouses and their families today as there was during the Reformation?
- How has your education informed your faith?
- What would be the benefit of finding creative ways to making your voice made known?
- Why is it important to consider the many voices of the women of the Reformation that are being unearthed today?

Hymn: ELW #419 – *For All the Faithful Women* - vs 1, 2, last

Closing Prayer:

God of compassion, throughout the ages you have blessed the church with faithful women who have not only nurtured their families in the faith but have worked tirelessly for the good of others and the sake of the Gospel. We give you thanks for their steadfast service and pray that we might follow their example in our own lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

References and additional sources for further study:

- Stjerna, Kirsi. *Women and the Reformation*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009.
- Karant-Nunn, Susan C. and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks. *Luther on Women – A Sourcebook*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works ~ Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958.

Session 3: The Voices of Children

Opening Prayer:

Eternal God, you came to us as a child at Christmas, bringing hope and light to the world. Be with us now as we learn about the children of the Reformation, that our study might shed light not only on their lives, but our own as well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Opening Discussion Point:

Talk about whether or not the church was a part of your life as a child, and if it was, how that took shape and what it meant for your life of faith.

Background:

During the Reformation, children played a central role in the life of not only the family, but the church and the society as well. Part of this focus on the children in church was due to the fact that people took their job seriously at that time to teach their children about the faith. The other reason this was most likely the case was that by doing so, children who were born into the time of the Reformation would be grounded in a faith tradition and would help that tradition to continue on into the future. The Reformed church even went so far as to try and dictate with whom and where children were raised so that it coincided with the faith tradition of the parents.

At that time children were not only at the center when it came to church life, they also were at the center of their parent's hearts, for scholars have found, that unlike what was thought at first, parents deeply loved their children at that time, just as we do today.

Unlike today, however, infant and child mortality rates were extremely high. Twenty percent of infants died before age one, and fifty percent of children died before age ten. This added extra significance to the sacrament of baptism, as many parents viewed this as a guarantee of salvation for their children, even though reformers shied away from placing this emphasis upon the act. Baptism also gained significance during this time simply because the number of sacraments was reduced from seven to two, and while communion was something that was celebrated by each person at least once a year, baptism was a sacrament that occurred only once in one's life. It was at a child's baptism where the child was made an official part of society, and it was in this sacrament that the whole community was reminded of the grace of God.

Education became emphasized during the Reformation as a result. For a child was normally baptized as an infant, therefore education was needed in order to teach a child the faith that they were baptized into. As a result, catechisms were written, and phrased in such a way that it was easier for folks to memorize, as many did not yet read.

However the Reformation also stressed the importance of educating all people how to read, in order that each person would be able to read the Word of God on their own and also share it with others. As a result, schools for children, both boys as well as girls, began to be established. And while curriculum

varied between what boys and girls learned, and the quality of education varied depending on whether one lived in a rural area or urban one, education was still lifted up as important in a child's life.

Yet sometimes basic needs for a child were not being met because at times they became orphans. During the Reformation much care for the poor was transferred from church organizations to governmental ones, however the church still played a role in this area. If it was determined that the family of a child had been faithful, then help was given. And not only immediate care was shared, but also long term care, with the creation of apprenticeships to ensure success for youth as they grew, and also success for the church to have people to work in these arenas.

Biblical Texts:

Psalm 78:1-4

¹Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,

³things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us.

⁴We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

⁵He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children;

⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children,
⁷so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

Psalm 103:8-13

⁸The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.

¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

¹³As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.

Proverbs 4:1-4

⁴Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight;

²for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching.

³When I was a son with my father, tender, and my mother's favorite,

⁴he taught me, and said to me,

“Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

Proverbs 22:6

⁶Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.

Matthew 18:1-6

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”²He called a child, whom he put among them,³and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.⁶“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew 19:13-15

¹³Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them;¹⁴but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”¹⁵And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Questions to ponder...

- In the Reformation era baptism was a significant time in a child’s life as it was their entrance into society and the church. Godparents were normally chosen wisely in order to have adults who would teach the child about the faith. Do you think that baptism has the same emphasis today? Why/why not?
- During the Reformation a natural consequence of the desire to have everyone able to read the Bible for themselves meant that many would need to learn how to read. As a result, schools became more common for the general population in order that children might learn to read. Even when teaching is truthful so that what is taught is the same as what is heard, how does reading for yourself change learning?
- Infant and child mortality rates were very high during the time of the Reformation. How would this experience change our society and faith life today?
- According to Matthew 18:1-6 and Matthew 19:13-15, the kingdom of heaven belongs to the little children. Why do you think this is so?

Hymn: ELW #781 – *Children of the Heavenly Father*

Closing Prayer:

Wondrous God, we give you thanks for the joy and miracle of children. Help us to continue to root them in faith and nurture them in love so that your Word might continue to be made known from generation to generation, until we all at the last join together with all your children in your heavenly kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

References and additional sources for further study:

- Spierling, Karen E. *Baptism and Childhood*. Edited by Peter Matheson. *Reformation Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Session 4: The Voice of the Laity

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God, you call each of us to utilize the gifts that we have been given in service to the church. As we hear the voice of the laity during the Reformation, may it be a reminder to listen to the voices of all your faithful as we seek to work together for the good of your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Discussion Point:

Do you feel like you have a voice in the church? Why/why not? Have you even ever thought about this?

Background:

During the Reformation one of the teachings that was stressed by the reformers was the priesthood of all believers. As a result, this teaching inspired many laity to make their voice be heard, and demanded the reformers in good conscience to listen. Usually this happened with those who were unhappy with their current circumstances. An example of this was the laity speaking up against clergy who were not performing their call in a faithful way, clergy who were allowing their teaching to differ from their personal practice. This worried the laity that others within the church would follow the priest's example.

But the laity did not just worry about the conduct of the priests, they also worried about their own conduct insofar as it would affect their salvation. For they knew that there were so many laws to follow, and at times the teaching of the church was hard to discern as there were so many sources that it was difficult for the laity to truly know God's will.

Yet at the time of the Reformation the laity were given something which empowered them to know God's will, namely God's Word as written in the Bible. They became well versed in Scripture and would quote it in their teaching and writing. It also gave them confidence to pray to God directly instead of using a mediator.

Lay theologians of the time tended to be male, middle class, and urban, although females who typically had means also wrote and rural folks at times contributed as well. Many of these folks were focused on understanding the truth, for they believed that the Romans had hidden and altered the truth for too long. An example of this search for the truth is how during the Reformation celibacy went from being the norm for priests to married life becoming the celebrated venue.

The laity began to feel empowered in other ways as well. For with the belief in the priesthood of all believers, as well as the ability to read the Word of God for themselves, laity began to understand that they were able to address God directly, and not through a mediator. They also realized that their forgiveness came from Christ and not from a priest. Laity also saw that transubstantiation had no Biblical basis, and as a result they questioned this teaching as well.

With this empowerment however came varying opinions on issues of faith, as many no longer sat around idly for the church to tell them what to believe. For an example, there were varying ideas on what justification by faith meant. While some believed that this was solely a gift from God, others believed that it was a choice. Or laity would also differ on their techniques, with some being very thoughtful in their approach, while others relied on proof-texting.

Things also changed for the laity in worship. Pews were added to churches in order that people might focus on the Word being read and preached. The laity were also now able to not only receive the bread as well as the wine, but they also many times helped with the distribution of it. People also now participated in the liturgy through the singing of the psalms.

Biblical Texts:

Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.⁷The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.⁸The nursing child

shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.⁹They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Psalms 116:1-2

¹I love the LORD,
because he has heard my voice and my supplications.
²Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

Proverbs 2:1-8

My child, if you accept my words
and treasure up my commandments within you,
²making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
³if you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding;
⁴if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures—
⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
⁷he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly,
⁸guarding the paths of justice
and preserving the way of his faithful ones.

1 Corinthians 12:7-31

⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.¹¹All these

are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.¹⁵If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.¹⁶And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be?²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body.²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect;²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member,²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?³¹But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Questions to ponder...

- Do you think of yourself as a part of the priesthood of all believers? Why/why not?
- How much do you think clergy are a role model for laity today?
- Do you feel that you know God's will and do you worry about your salvation?
- As you travel on your journey of faith, do you tend to look to Scripture and make your own conclusions, or do you look to the church to tell you what to believe, or both?

Hymn: ELW #669 – *Rise Up, O Saints of God!*

Closing Prayer:

O God, you have called us as your saints to rise up and follow where you call. We give you thanks that you have blessed each of us with gifts for service, and we pray that you would help us to discern where you would have us go and what you would have us do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

References and additional sources for further study:

- McKee, Elsie. *The Emergence of Lay Theologies*. Edited by Peter Matheson. *Reformation Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Mentzer, Raymond A. *The Piety of Townspeople and City Folk*. Edited by Peter Matheson. *Reformation Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Session 5: The Voice of the Outsider

Opening Prayer:

God of all, you have called us to love our neighbor as ourselves. As we study the voice of the outsider during the Reformation, may it remind us of our call to be gracious to others, just as you have been gracious to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Discussion Point:

Has there ever been a time where you have felt like an outsider? What was the experience like, and what did you learn from it?

Background:

As with any age, the Reformation found itself making lines of distinction between insiders and outsiders, if for nothing else than to help define what it meant to be Christian. This task was especially prevalent at this time due to the fact that various denominations had begun and each had their own take on what the Word meant and how to be the church. Thus, it was not about learning what it meant to be an outsider; instead it was about learning what it meant to be an insider.

During the time of the Reformation, most Christians had a fear of the Muslims. This reputation grew over the years as a result of a history of violence, starting with the 700's when Iberia was invaded by the Muslims. But in 1492 the Spanish invaded

and took over the Iberian Peninsula. Initially they allowed the Muslims who were there to freely practice their faith traditions, however by the turn of the century Muslim books were being burned and then they were forced to either become Christians or leave. This allowed them to continue to practice their faith privately; however in 1566 the Spanish king decreed that all Muslims were to hand over their children to Christian families. This obviously led to a revolt, and after it was all over, Muslims were banished from the land.

People in Europe also had a fear of Muslims from stories they heard from Orthodox Christians who had fled Constantinople after it was taken by the Ottoman Empire in 1453. Then they also heard that the Ottoman Empire, or “Turks” as they were commonly known, were moving their way eastward and taking such places as Belgrade and areas of Hungary during the 1520’s. This made Europeans only more fearful of Muslims.

Some took advantage of this fear and wrote books about the Muslims which would have some base in their beliefs and practices, but many times would sensationalize stories to feed off of people’s fear. The church also used the advancement of the Muslims to show that God was punishing Christians for not taking care of their own sin within the church. It would also use the faithfulness of Muslims to spark the faithfulness of Christians, for example they would talk about how Muslims know the Koran and how Christians should know the Bible just as well.

The other group of people who were seen as outsiders during the time of the Reformation were the Jews. This experience was a little more personal for Christians, as there is a relationship established between the two groups due to

Christianity’s roots in Judaism. Yet Jews were especially hated at that time because they were seen as those who rejected the Messiah, God’s son. This Jewish hatred took shape in many ways in society during the Reformation, including in artwork, which would depict a figure for the synagogue blindfolded, or images such as a Judensau - a Jew in contact with a pig. Books were also published that were written by converted Jews with the intent to encourage this hatred and fear of the Jews.

Yet many European towns relied on the Jews in financial matters, as they were good with money and would set up pawn shops and money lending as a resource for the poor. However they were never able to really settle in one place. They had to have permission to live in an area and then they could just be evicted for being a Jew.

Interestingly enough, even when frustration with the Jews increased for reformers who had held out hope that they would convert and did not, at the same time, the reformers increasingly resonated with the Old Testament stories of the Jewish people and how they were persecuted for their beliefs!

Biblical Texts:

Genesis 17:15-22

¹⁵God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”¹⁷Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years

old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"¹⁸And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!"¹⁹God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him."²⁰As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.²¹But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."²²And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

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.

Romans 10:12

¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him.

Galatians 3:23-29

23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.²⁴Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith.²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring,* heirs according to the promise.

Questions to ponder...

- In looking not only at Christians' fear of Muslims during the time of the Reformation, as well as the fear of many today, it seems as if we have not gotten very far in learning how to be neighbors with one another and to love our neighbor as ourselves. What do you think needs to happen in order for this to take place?
- The Jews during the Reformation were never really able to have a strong sense of security when it came to living in one place, as there was always the chance that they would be asked to move, and many times this happened. How do you think this nomadic lifestyle would affect your faith?
- As we study the Reformation, why is it important that we look at the voice of the outsider? What difference does this make?
- What are some examples about what the Bible teaches us about how to treat outsiders?

Hymn: ELW #358 – *Great God, Your Love Has Called Us*

Closing Prayer:

Great God, your love has called us here, and for that we give you thanks. Help us to put aside our fear of the other in order that we might be able to freely serve our neighbor and follow your example of love that knows no bounds. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

References and additional sources for further study:

- Boettcher, Susan R. *Insiders and Outsiders*. Edited by Peter Matheson. *Reformation Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works ~ Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958.

Session 6: The Voice of Luther

Opening Prayer:

Eternal God, we give you thanks for your servant Martin Luther and for all the ways that he made a positive impact on the church, especially for his celebration of the priesthood of all believers, as well as his revelation that we are justified by grace through faith. As we now learn of Luther's more human perspectives, we give thanks for the heavenly perspective of grace, not only for Luther but for us as well. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Discussion Point:

Talk about the danger and injustice of allowing history to portray a person such as Martin Luther solely in a good light, without allowing history to show the more challenging aspects of a person's life or beliefs.

Background:

Martin Luther was certainly prophetic in all the ways that he was able to make a positive impact on the life of the church as he promoted the ideas of sola scriptura, or scripture alone; sola fides, or faith alone; and sola gratia, or grace alone. He has been heralded as the father of the Reformation, and many books and various films have been made about the wondrous things that he was able to accomplish. And while all of this is certainly true and worthy of praise, it is always important for us to remember that Martin Luther was a human person just like

us. New scholarship on the Reformation has cast light on some of Martin Luther's thoughts and teachings that had been previously looked over in order to maintain this great man's reputation. Yet knowing that we cannot be simultaneously saint and sinner, as Luther taught, if there is no sin, it is important for us to have a full view of Luther, the saint and the sinner, if we truly want to know who he was and what he stood for.

Martin Luther was a man of his times. As was discussed in the previous chapter, people during the time of the Reformation had a fear and even times hatred towards those who were thought of as outsiders. For Martin Luther, this was especially true for him in regards to the Jews. Yet he did not hate the Jews that were found in the Old Testament, as these were Jews who were still waiting for the promised Messiah. In fact the focus of most of his teaching was on the Old Testament, and he cherished the Old Testament stories, as he resonated with the struggles of the Jews in the Bible as they remained faithful in difficult circumstances. But Martin Luther did have a hatred for those Jews who came after Jesus, for the promised Messiah had come and they would not acknowledge him. Earlier in his ministry and writing it is evident that Luther tried to hold out hope that the Jewish people would convert, but by the end of his life he had no tolerance for the Jews.

Interestingly enough, Martin Luther did not have any friends or colleagues that were Jewish, and perhaps this made it easier to dislike them. Yet because Martin was such a strong advocate of the Word, it was perhaps this Word which challenged him to stand firm in his belief of the importance of Christ. Even so, we live in an age where in the not too distant past we experienced the holocaust, and after this unthinkable tragedy, it causes us to

ponder how Luther's treatment of the Jews had an impact on what happened, as the holocaust began in German Lutheran territory.

With this new scholarship came an understanding for a need for repentance and reconciliation. As a result, the ELCA made the following declaration:

Declaration of ELCA to Jewish Community

“The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on April 18, 1994, adopted the following document as a statement on Lutheran-Jewish relations:

In the long history of Christianity there exists no more tragic development than the treatment accorded the Jewish people on the part of Christian believers. Very few Christian communities of faith were able to escape the contagion of anti-Judaism and its modern successor, anti-Semitism. Lutherans belonging to the Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America feel a special burden in this regard because of certain elements in the legacy of the reformer Martin Luther and the catastrophes, including the Holocaust of the twentieth century, suffered by Jews in places where the Lutheran churches were strongly represented.

The Lutheran communion of faith is linked by name and heritage to the memory of Martin Luther, teacher and reformer. Honoring his name in our own, we recall his bold stand for truth, his earthy and sublime words of wisdom, and above all his witness to God's saving Word. Luther proclaimed a gospel

for people as we really are, bidding us to trust a grace sufficient to reach our deepest shames and address the most tragic truths.

In the spirit of that truth-telling, we who bear his name and heritage must with pain acknowledge also Luther's anti-Judaic diatribes and the violent recommendations of his later writings against the Jews. As did many of Luther's own companions in the sixteenth century, we reject this violent invective, and yet more do we express our deep and abiding sorrow over its tragic effects on subsequent generations. In concert with the Lutheran World Federation, we particularly deplore the appropriation of Luther's words by modern anti-Semites for the teaching of hatred toward Judaism or toward the Jewish people in our day.

Grieving the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred, moreover, we express our urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people. We recognize in anti-Semitism a contradiction and an affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling, and we pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry, both within our own circles and in the society around us. Finally, we pray for the continued blessing of the Blessed One upon the increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community.”

Biblical Texts:

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

¹⁸For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” ²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength. ²⁶Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 10:27-33

²⁷If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.²⁸But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—²⁹I mean the other’s conscience, not your own. For why should my liberty be subject to the judgment of someone else’s conscience?³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks?³¹So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.³²Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,³³just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved.

Matthew 7:1-5

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged.²For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.³Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?⁴Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye?⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

John 12:44-50

⁴⁴Then Jesus cried aloud: “Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me.⁴⁵And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.⁴⁶I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.⁴⁷I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.⁴⁸The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge,⁴⁹for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak.⁵⁰And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.”

Questions to ponder...

- What difference do you think it would have made, if any, if Martin Luther had some friends who were Jewish?
- How has the Holocaust caused us to see and understand our relationship to those who are Jewish in a new way?
- Why was it important for us as a Lutheran Church to make a declaration in regards to how Luther talked about the Jews?
- As Lutherans of the 21st century, what is the benefit that comes from our distance in looking at the Jewish faith that Martin Luther did not have?

Hymn: ELW #605 – *Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive*

Closing Prayer:

God of reconciliation, we give you thanks for your grace which Martin Luther shared with us. We pray that as we come in repentance for the sinfulness of our past, that others might have grace with us as well. We also pray that as we deal with others in the future, that we might share your grace with them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

References and additional sources for further study:

- Schramm, Brooks and Kirsi I. Stjerna, eds. *Martin Luther, The Bible, and The Jewish People*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.
- “Declaration of ELCA to Jewish Community”. www.elca.org, 1994.

Session 7: The Voice of the Love

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, we give you thanks for sending your son, Jesus Christ, into the world to show us how to love. As we meet together this day, may our study renew our desire to follow your call to love one another, but may it also deepen our understanding of your great love for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Opening Discussion Point:

What similarities and differences do you see between God's love and human love?

Background:

While studying the works of Martin Luther is certainly helpful in understanding the Reformation and knowing the roots of our Lutheran tradition, for many the distance in time between the Reformation and now can make the language of Luther a bit difficult to digest. Yet recent scholarship has made Luther's theology more accessible, as it frames Luther's ideas in the context of love.

For Martin Luther there are two kinds of love – God's love and human love. In Luther's works and in the Bible God's love is focused upon those things which we would see as unlovable, in order that God might bring them value, while human love is focused upon those things which are good and thus lovable.

Yet through Christ we know God's love, and with that love we are able to go beyond our human love which can only love that which is already good, to loving God and our neighbor, because God's love helps us to move beyond our own self-interest to seeing the needs of others.

Biblical Texts:

Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

1 John 3:16-18

¹⁶We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.¹⁷How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? ¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

1 John 4:7-12

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

John 13:33-35

³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Questions to ponder...

- Do you find thinking of Luther's theology in terms of love helpful or unhelpful? Why/why not?
- How does God's love shape the way we love?
- How is it a comfort to know that God loves that which is unlovable?

Hymn: ELW #631 – *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Closing Prayer:

God of mercy, we give you thanks that you love us even though we are not worthy of your love, and that your love fills us in order that we might love others as you have first loved us. Help us to share the good news of your love with all the world through our words and deeds. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

References and additional sources for further study:

- Mannermaa, Tuomo. *Two Kinds of Love ~ Martin Luther's Religious World*. Translated by Kirsi I. Stjerna. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.