

WORSHIP NOTES

*Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost • Reformation Sunday
October 30, 2011*

The Season

There is much to celebrate on this Sunday that concludes the autumn portion of Ordinary Time. It is Reformation Sunday, and we commemorate Martin Luther's posting of the Ninety-Five Theses (October 31, 1517) as we pray for continuing renewal and unity in the church. We rejoice with three of our young people taking the next step in their faith journey as they publicly profess their faith and affirm their baptism; and it is the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. It is a day to consider faith reflected in the lives we live as well as the words we profess, and we pray today to lead lives of true humility, and to hear the call to serve God and one another . . .

In Word . . .

Our Old Testament reading comes from the Levitical Holiness Code, so named for the opening verses, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." We are holy because we are 'set apart' for a particular calling, to be signs and instruments of God's grace, presence, and purpose. In our reading from Thessalonians, Paul reminds us that being an apostle of Jesus Christ and the Gospel means challenging the powers that be as well as conventional wisdom. "We speak not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts." Our Gospel reading includes one of Jesus' best known statements, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The setting is the Pharisees' final attempt to discredit or trick Jesus by asking him to identify the greatest law. Jesus takes the 613 commandments found in the Torah and summarizes them with what has been the core of his life and teaching. He does not invalidate, but reinterprets and reprioritizes the commandments, and in so doing, gives us a means to discern and interpret the will of God in the Word of God. Jesus then poses a question to the Pharisees, "What do you think of the Messiah, whose son is he?" As Christians we are called to ask ourselves what Jesus means to us, to show the world God's love in the character of our relationship together, and to express our love of God through care for all.

And Song . . .

Traditional (9:00)

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," is one of Martin Luther's best-known hymns. It was written in 1529, a time when Luther and his followers were experiencing significant opposition to their movement. Luther found comfort and encouragement in Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." A hymn that first symbolized the Protestant Reformation, its powerful words and tune have contributed to an enduring popularity that has crossed many boundaries. It has been translated into almost every language and it is sung in churches around the world. The tune was composed by Luther and named "Ein feste Burg" from the text's first line.

Contemporary (10:30)

Our opening song, "We Are Called," and sending song, "Go Out to All the World," are by Minnesota composer and author, David Haas. Both of these scripturally based texts speak of the importance of community and service to others in our life of faith. "We Are Called" is based on Micah 6:8, and "Go Out to All the World" is based on Psalm 117.

The beautiful Benediction we sing today was composed by Pastor David for the 1991 confirmation class of Edison Park Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois, which included his daughter, Maia.