Reformation Observed / October 25, 2026
Ephesians 6:16-17
"*In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*"

Faith and Salvation through the Word

Ephesians is a great book, because at its centre is God's grace in Christ Jesus, given by the Holy Spirit who through the word, works faith in our hearts, nourishes, sustains it and brings it to fulfillment in everlasting life. Paul begins Ephesians saying, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*" We might think of blessing in terms of food and drink, material wealth and the good things of the earth. We need these to live in the world and they certainly enhance our lives and promote a sense of well being. However, as important as they are, these blessings are in time and in time pass away, even as in time we will all pass away. The greatest, most important and most necessary blessings are of the spirit. Our need for reconciliation with God, forgiveness, the indwelling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to walk with God in Christ in faith and faithfulness.

The first and greatest blessing is redemption from sin, the devil and death in the forgiveness of sin received through faith for the sake of Jesus and the blood He shed on the cross. In the gospels Jesus asked, "*What good does it do if a person gains the whole world and loses their soul?*" It's a rhetorical question, because the answer is 'nothing.' There is no gain when a person loses her or his soul. There is no point, or purpose in anything in life if we lose our souls. In mercy, God gave Jesus into our world and into our lives that He would redeem us the spiritual death of sin and the eternal condemnation of hell, bearing our sin, the world's sin, making full atonement through the blood of His cross. Paul writes in chapter two, "*God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved.*" The greatest blessing is to made alive together with Christ, by that grace we are saved.

The first and greatest blessing is redemption from sin, death and the devil. This blessing is for the whole world to receive. The second greatest blessing is the gift of faith by which we believe in Jesus as our Saviour and receive from Him, pardon, peace and the promise of an eternal inheritance in the presence of God in His

resurrection. Faith is the gift of God, created in our hearts through the word and working of the Holy Spirit. Faith is the work of God in our lives. First opening our eyes to see our sins, our hearts to feel their guilt. Secondly, opening our eyes to see Jesus and the sacrifice of His cross for the forgiveness of sins, opening our hearts to receive Him as our Lord and only Saviour. Faith is the continuous working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, teaching us through the word, nurturing our faith, making it strong so that He may carry us through life, past the gates of death into the presence of the Father and finally to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the Sunday of the Reformation, we remember of first importance that the Spirit works faith in our hearts, sustains it, makes it strong and brings salvation to fulfillment through the word.

Throughout this letter to the Ephesians St. Paul speaks about the power and promise of the word. In chapter one he says that in Christ, "*you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.*" Do you want to receive the Holy Spirit? Hear the word. The Holy Spirit comes through the word, the gospel of Jesus our Saviour. Do you want to receive Jesus your Saviour? Go to the word. He comes to you in the word. The Holy Spirit gives faith, nourishes faith, strengthens faith through the words of Moses, the prophets and the evangelists. The angel of Revelation cries, "*The spirit of prophecy is testimony to Jesus.*" The reason we read the bible in worship, in personal devotion and in study, is so that the Holy Spirit would strengthen and confirm our faith, making Christ known again and again as our Saviour and drawing our hearts closer to Him in devotion. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Jesus. The Holy Spirit works faith and gives salvation through the word.

Reformation Sunday commemorates the 16th century Lutheran and Protestant Reformations. At the heart of this religious controversy that shook the Western Catholic Church to its foundations and which continues to affect the Christian Church to this day, was the place of the scriptures in the life of the church and the understanding of the scriptures by the church. In the opinion of the 16th century reformers, Lutheran and Calvinist, the medieval church had obscured the word, removed it from its central place in the life of church and replaced it with the opinions of philosophers and theologians. The reformations of the 16th century sought to return the word to its central and foundational place in the faith and life of the Holy Christian Church. The three solas or only's of the Lutheran Reformation are: Only Scripture, Only Faith, Only Grace. We are saved only by God's grace for

the sake of Christ, received through simple faith, worked in the human heart by the Holy Spirit through the scriptures.

Our thoughts, opinions, dreams, visions must all pass through the lens of the scriptures and be subject to its wisdom. St. Peter had more amazing experiences with Jesus than any other person. He walked on the water with Jesus. He saw Jesus perform manifold miracles. He saw Jesus' divine glory as He was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration. But in the end the most certain experience he had with Jesus was in the word. In his second letter Peter writes, "*We ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And we have something more certain, the prophetic word.*" The word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path leading us to Jesus. In Him the words of Moses, the psalmists, the prophets find fulfillment. He is the key of David unlocking the scriptures and opening our minds to see Him as promised Christ, the fulfiller of the law in our place, the redeemer of our Sins, our Lord and Saviour. In all circumstances Paul tells us to take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and most importantly the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Faith and salvation come through the word, by the working of the Holy Spirit.

God makes Himself known in His word. Certainly, we can know there is a God through the creation, which bears witness to the glory of Him who called it into being and sustains it by His powerful word. We can know there is a God through our own intuition. God created us and no matter how far we have moved from Him there is still a part of us that senses His being and feels His absence. A biographer of Mark Twain commented that the famous author did not believe there was a god and was forever angry at God for not existing. We can know there is a God without the word, but the word shows us what God is like, the nature of His being, the power of His love. In the word we see God as the Holy One, in whose presence nothing sinful and no sinner can abide. In the word we see God as the Holy One, who in love takes away the offense of sin, by giving Jesus in our place as our Redeemer to bear our sins, forgive their offense and cover us with His righteousness that we would stand in His presence, now through faith, fully and forever in His resurrection. In the scriptures God shows His loving face in the face of Jesus, in whom as Paul says, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The book of Ephesians and the Sunday of the Reformation are about the same thing, Jesus our Saviour, who makes Himself known in the words of scripture. Jesus' longest recorded and most well-known sermon is the Sermon on the Mount. In that sermon He said that He had not come to abolish the law and the prophets, the

scriptures, but rather to fulfill them. Jesus fulfilled the scriptures, keeping the law in our place and suffering the consequences of our breaking the law through His death on the cross. Jesus fulfilled the prophets by showing Himself to be the long-awaited Saviour who would redeem Israel and all people from their sins, bringing the universal blessing of forgiveness, peace with God and eternal life to all who believe His Name and call upon Him for salvation. He concluded saying, "*Whoever hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock.*" We are wise to base our faith and our lives on the rock of His words.

Jesus is the rock of our salvation, the cornerstone upon which the church is built and grows. He builds His church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, which are the scriptures, the word of God. The scriptures lead us to Jesus and testify to Him as Saviour, even as Moses and Elijah stood beside Him on the Mount of Transfiguration testifying to Him as the Saviour. He has the words of eternal life. He is the word of life. We keep His words, the words of God in scripture, first by believing in Him, thereafter by nurturing and reinforcing our faith by continually feeding on the word, studying the word, praying the word, meditating on the word and believing it. The Holy Spirit gives faith and salvation through the word in which we see Jesus and by which we receive Him in our hearts and confess Him with our lips as our God and only Saviour. God grant this to all of us for the sake of Jesus. In His Name. Amen