



REFORMATION DAY

OCTOBER 31

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:31-34

A reading from Jeremiah.

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.

Word of God, word of life. or The word of the Lord.

PSALMODY: Psalm 46

FIRST READING *Jeremiah = jehr-eh-MY-uh*

The voice is the voice of God. It requires the ring of authority, of power and might. A subtle change in tone between verses 31-32 and verses 33-34 will be helpful. In the first two verses, almighty God recalls the unfaithfulness of God’s people (with some sadness? some anger?). In the following verses God’s overwhelming desire to forgive sets the tone.

SECOND READING: Romans 3:19-28

A reading from Romans.

¹⁹Now we know that, whatever the law says,
it speaks to those who are under the law,
so that every mouth may be silenced
and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

²⁰For no human will be justified before him
by deeds prescribed by the law,
for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

²¹But now, apart from the law,
the righteousness of God has been disclosed
and is attested by the Law and the Prophets,
²²the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ
for all who believe.

For there is no distinction,

²³since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;

²⁴they are now justified by his grace as a gift,
through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

²⁵whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood,
effective through faith.

He did this to demonstrate his righteousness,
because in his divine forbearance

he had passed over the sins previously committed;

²⁶it was to demonstrate at the present time his own righteousness,
so that he is righteous
and he justifies the one who has the faith of Jesus.

²⁷Then what becomes of boasting?

It is excluded.

Through what kind of law? That of works?

No, rather through the law of faith.

²⁸For we hold that a person is justified by faith
apart from works prescribed by the law.

Word of God, word of life. or The word of the Lord.

SECOND READING

The second reading amplifies the first reading. The Romans text makes several simple, sequential points. (1) No one will be justified by doing the works prescribed in the law (2) because all people “fall short” in attempting to keep the law. (3) Now we are justified by God’s grace, (4) which is a gift in the sacrifice of Christ Jesus received by faith. Verse 28 is both the topic sentence and the punch line of the lesson. Allow the whole reading to lead the assembly to its hopeful conclusion.

GOSPEL: John 8:31-36

The holy gospel according to John.

³¹Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him,
“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,
³²and you will know the truth,
and the truth will make you free.”

³³They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham
and have never been slaves to anyone.
What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?”

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you,
everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

³⁵The slave does not have a permanent place in the household;
the son has a place there forever.

³⁶So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

Perhaps the assembly would profit from a sound of gentleness in the voice of Jesus, considering those to whom he is speaking: “the Jews who had believed in him.” Verse 32 has become something of a battle cry in contemporary parlance. A softer, kinder delivery may help the assembly hear it more clearly.