



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN!

As you can tell, today is a special day in the life of the church. The red paraments, the title on the bulletin, “Reformation Sunday” and my beautiful red stole that I only get to wear twice a year all tell us today is special, Reformation Sunday. Some call it the birthday of the church. Others celebrate the re-forming of the church by Martin Luther. And then there are others out there that have no idea what we will pray about, who we sing too and what I will talk about this morning. What a shame, what a loss. We need to continue to work on sharing this good news with everyone we meet.

This morning, I would like to look specifically at the statement Jesus makes to the Jews. “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.” In my study I read this passage in many different translations of the Bible:

NIV: Hold to my teaching

NKJ: If you abide in my word.

KJ: If ye continue in my word

Message: Stick with this living out what I tell you

CEV: Keep on obeying.

WEBUS: If you remain in my word.

Interesting how just about every translation that I read, and there were over 75 versions on my Bible App, all had a different word for what we should do. Remember now that this is Jesus talking. He says: Keep, stick, hold, abide, continue, and remain in my word. And for some reason this last one really stuck with me. Remain in my word. So, what on earth do all these translations tell us about what Jesus is wanting us to hear? The word Jesus actually used is “Meno”. It is one of Jesus’ favorite words in John’s Gospel.

Jesus said, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **remains**, (meno) in me, and I in him” John 6:56

Jesus said, “**Remain** (meno) in me, and I in you. As the branch can’t bear fruit by itself unless it **remains** in the vine, so neither can you unless you **remain** in me.” John 15:4

Jesus said, "If you keep my commandments, you will **remain** (meno) in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and **remain** in his love." John 15:10

Those are only a few of the instances in which Jesus uses the word remain. "Remain in my word" I think that He is talking about a life that is firmly planted in His word. It is a life that seeks guidance through His word and certainly one that is nourished by His word.

Think with me for a minute about being inside a sturdy house, residing there. You feel protected against the elements, against invasion, except by the occasional ant, Japanese beetle, or a fly. Now think of this house as one that Jesus built for you. Will anything be able to get to you. Jesus builds houses with His word. He will protect us from everything if we only remain in His word.

Tomorrow in Sunday school we will be reading the story of the Three Little pigs. You remember the fable that tells of three little pigs who go out into the world to seek their fortune, and each of them builds a house. Well, this story holds much for us to learn. The image of the big bad wolf huffing and puffing and blowing down the first little pigs house made of straw. Then the big bad wolf moves on the second little pigs house and huffs and puffs and blows down that house too as it was made of sticks. How vulnerable these two little pigs made themselves and even though this is a children's story, they get eaten. Imagine the nightmares that this story has cause over the years.

Ah but some good news. The third little pig built his house of bricks, and the same scenario happens to him as now the big bad wolf has the taste for another side of pork. He huffs and puffs and tries to blow down the house. And nothing happens. The brick house keeps the little pig safe and secure. The house was strong enough to withstand the big bad wolf, as he comes to his demise, and the little pig lives happily ever after.

We too need to build a strong foundation, strong houses, strong lives if we want to keep safe from the big bad wolves of the world.

Do you believe in big bad wolves? If not ask the farmer next to me and see how many cattle he has lost to them. Or Paul as he writes in Ephesians 6:12 about the Christian life.

For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places".

Folks, they are out there. Many disguise themselves as wolves in sheep's clothing, but they are real. Think about it governments, terrorists groups, people deep into devil worship all can be forces of wickedness. And so, it is best to prepare ourselves again these things and so many more in the world around us and hold tight to Jesus' promise.

"If you remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples. You will know the Truth and the truth will make you free." When Jesus talks about abiding, continuing, holding, or remaining in His word, he is talking about obeying his teachings. But even more than that He is telling us to build a life based on what He would do, a life of faith, a strong faith. No straw, no sticks, only the bricks to build on. The bricks that are His word, His way, and His truth.

And many of you sitting here today are those people who used God's word to live by. You can recognize these folks too. They have founded their lives on Jesus himself. And how do you do that? Well, you read God's word. I won't ask you to raise your hand if you read the Bible every day. I

don't want to embarrass anyone, but that is what it takes folks. To have the Scriptures in your hand, reading them every single day. Learning what Jesus taught us and how to live our lives to his glory.

And you also need to talk about what you have read. Join a Bible study, a small group, or find a friend who has a strong faith and talk to them. Be close to those who have built their lives on Jesus, and you will learn from them how to have strength to handle daily life and death and everything in between.

There is a lot of faith sitting in these pews today. I see it every time I do a funeral, preach a sermon, baptize a baby, or serve communion whether in the hospital room or here in our sanctuary. And Martin Luther is one who developed such a faith life. He was part of a church that had gotten off the track with selling indulgences, and in teaching the pain of purgatory. Luther wanted to go back to Scripture alone, Sola scriptura. Through reading the book of Romans, Luther learned of God's love and of God's grace. He learned so many things and they transformed his life. He went on as you know, to write those 95 theses that he hung on the church door in Wittenberg and he believed that were not scriptural. He wanted to reform the church and bring it back to following Jesus in Scripture alone. Luther said, "The Bible is alive; it speaks to me. The Bible has feet: it runs after me. The Bible had hands; it lays hold on me."

Awesome thought. And in order to live one's life remaining in God's word, you must first know what God's word says. And Luther said another profound thing that I just love, "I have made a covenant with my Lord God that He send me neither visions nor dreams, nor even angels. For I am well satisfied with the gift of Holy Scriptures, which gives me abundant instruction and all that I need to know both for this life and for that which is to come." WOW

We are blessed to live in a time and a place where everyone can have a Bible in a language they can read. It is a privilege we often overlook. But it is ours for the reading. We must take advantage of this availability of Bibles and learn what it means to remain in God's word and become if you aren't already a disciple. A couple things that Luther would suggest.

1. Accept the grace that God wants to bestow on you. Accept forgiveness of your sins that He alone offers. Give up the burden of guilt to the Lord.
2. Immerse yourself in Christian fellowship and listen to them. Let their faith rub off on you.
3. Come to worship whenever you can and take part in the sacrament of Holy Communion. You need God's grace and forgiveness that this meal conveys.
4. Get involved in some sort of a study. Read your Bible together with others. Listen and learn from others.
5. Lastly, always remember our Scripture text for today.

"If you Remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." Remain, keep, stick hold, abide, continue in God's word. Luther would say that the truth is Scripture over tradition, faith over works and grace over merit. We are saved by the truth, Jesus Christ to be free. And Jesus is the WORD made flesh. AMEN