



20/20 Vision—Open Our Eyes Rediscovering the Way

Sunday, October 27, 2019

Mark 10:46-52

Covenant Presbyterian Church in
Madison, WI

Rev. Charlie Berthoud

Reformation Sunday

Stewardship Commitment Sunday

Joshua said, “Now therefore revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ¹⁵ Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

--Joshua 24.14-15

Happy Reformation Sunday!

Every year on the last Sunday of October we remember that we are part of the Reformed branch of the Christian church, with origins in the Reformation of 500 years ago. Courageous leaders like Martin Luther and John Calvin helped the church recognize abuses and get back on track and rediscover God’s way, focusing on God and God’s word.

One of the big concerns of the reformers was idolatry, worshipping the wrong things in the wrong way.

They knew the first and second commandments

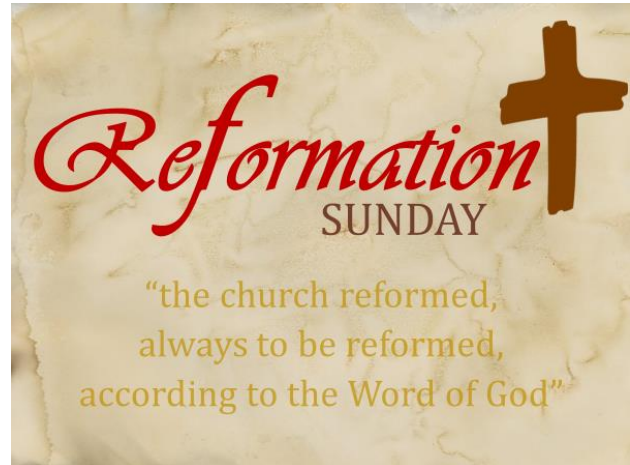
You shall have not other gods before me

You shall not worship idols or any false gods

So the Reformers, like Joshua as you heard in the first reading, admonished people to serve God alone, to “choose this day” --and every day—to put God first.

The Reformers also were smart enough to realize that they didn't have all the answers, that God was still speaking, still showing them things, individually and as a church.

Thus one of the themes of the Reformation is printed in your bulletin and featured prominently in the Presbyterian Church Book of Order—we are a church reformed, always reforming, according to the word of God.



The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to be “the church reformed, always to be reformed, according to the Word of God” in the power of the Spirit. --Book of Order, PCUSA (G-6.01)

That idea of “always reforming” leads to our gospel reading.

All month, as we get closer to the year 2020, we've been thinking about how God is opening our eyes. We seek clear vision, as individuals and as a church, as we move into 2020.

Our gospel lesson comes from the end of Mark 10, where Jesus heals a blind man. Listen for the good news.

As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately Bartimaeus regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way.

Thanks be to God for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us that Jesus opened the eyes of Bartimaeus and several other people. We can certainly hear those narratives in a literal sense: Jesus as the Son of God would certainly be able to open the eyes of someone who was blind.

But at the same time, I think we can hear this narrative of Bartimaeus in a figurative sense.

The text comes at the conclusion of a section on discipleship, with sort of an implied message that disciples of Jesus open their eyes and see things anew.

And we need to remember that at one point, Bartimaeus could see. He says to Jesus: My teacher, let me see *again*.

Somehow, literally or figuratively, Bartimaeus lost the sight that he once had.

He lost the way, and Jesus helped him rediscover the way.

Most of us don't experience literal blindness, but many of us do get lost and lose the way.



Suppose I was going on a journey, and I knew the way.

I start out and things are good, but halfway through the journey, I make a wrong turn, get distracted by something, run into obstacles, challenges.

To find the way again, to rediscover the way, I need help.

I might need other people to pick me up and get me on my feet, encourage me and point me in the right direction.

When we wander off by ourselves, we can easily get lost. We need each other to stay on track or to get back on track.

We need each other to help find that clarity of who we are and what we're called to do and be.

Here at Covenant I think we recognize how easy it is to get lost, to take a wrong turn, to lose the way, and how much we need each others' help.

We all get lost, and we need each other to rediscover the way, the way of God.

Our mission statement reflect this reality, with several references to the journey and being together.

Claimed and humbled by God's grace, **we are disciples journeying in covenant with God and one another.** Our disciple-forming community is called to worship and pray **together**; to cultivate deep and nurturing reciprocal relationships; to minister faithfully in our daily lives; and to warmly welcome all into our fellowship as we seek a Christ-centered life. **We cannot journey alone; we need one another.** Together, with hearts, minds, and arms wide open, we reach out to others in love.

We're on this journey together, as a community of faith, trying to help each other find clarity and purpose, comfort and hope.

So we try to provide multiple ways for people to come together and find the way of God. Education, mission, fellowship, music

Not only is today Reformation Sunday, when we remember that we are regularly in the process of being reformed, redirected, and finding God's way, but it's also Stewardship Commitment Sunday.

I have three invitations on this Commitment Sunday.

1. Make a pledge of financial support for the coming year, on a Ministry Fund Commitment Card. It's really an estimate of giving, not a legally binding document, to help the leadership of the church make plans for the year.
2. Take the Serving Survey, which helps us get an idea of what ministry we can do together. If you check off that you're interested in helping to make coffee or do mission work or help in worship, it simply means you might get a call or email asking to help some time. You're not locked in for life.
3. Be renewed, be reformed. Today is as good a day as any to open yourself to God, to make a new commitment to living as a faithful child of God, as a member of this community.

- Maybe you make a commitment to get involved in a Bible study, a fellowship group, a music group, even a committee.
- Maybe you make a commitment to regular prayer and scripture, to be reformed “according to God’s word.”
- Maybe you make a commitment to getting the help you need with whatever idol or demon or struggle you face in your life.
- Maybe you make a new commitment to be a loving presence with the people in your life, and that might even mean yourself.

We can make these commitments with confidence, because God has made commitments to us.

Commitment Sunday

Jesus came and said to them . . .
 “Go therefore and make disciples of all
 nations, baptizing them in the name of the
 Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 and teaching them to obey everything
 that I have commanded you.
 And remember, I am with you always, to the
 end of the age.”

--Matthew 28:18-20

God has promised to love us, to forgive us, and to be with us always.

In Jesus’ final words to the disciples in Matthew 28, God promised to never leave us alone. After teaching and sending the disciples into the world to continue what Jesus began, he promised them, he made the commitment to them:

Remember I am with you always.

The good news is: God has committed to us, so we can commit to God.

Thanks be to God. Let us pray.