Reformation Sunday: Re-Forming Our Lives

Jeremiah 31:31–34

We love traditions. They steady us in a changing world—whether it is a family Thanksgiving menu, a favorite team singing together after every game, or Lutherans raising their voices in "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" on Reformation Day.

Tradition can be a mighty fortress against too much change. Yet faith was never meant to be stagnant. God is always calling us to grow, return, and be re-formed.

Martin Luther did not set out to begin a revolution when he posted his 95 Theses on the church door in Wittenberg. His intention was to invite the church into a conversation about abandoning harmful practices in order to follow Christ more faithfully. In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God also speaks of re-forming relationship. In this case, God wanted to re-form the relationship between God and the Israelites, his chosen people. God told Jeremiah to repeat this promise: "I will make a new covenant." This new covenant would not simply be a revised copy of the old one. God promised to write the law upon the people's hearts, to ensure that being taught about God would be replaced by knowing God "by heart." God also promised to wipe away all the Israelites' sins, to give them a clean start.

Despite God's generosity, the Israelites ended up wandering from God's path, and as a consequence, were exiled from the promised land. Despite their inconstancy, God, whose love is constant, pursued them. He sent his Son, not to punish us, but to purchase our salvation. His death on the cross is our life. So although our all-to-human hearts still wander, we do not need to fear that we are abandoned. God remains faithful. In Jesus Christ, God has given us forgiveness and salvation—not as a reward for being good enough, but as a gift of grace. Each time we fall, we can turn again to Christ and ask him to re-form our hearts.

Most of us will not experience one dramatic moment of transformation. The re-forming of our relationship with God, and through his grace, our relationship with the world, is typically slow. Our changes take time. But look back on your life, and you may see how God has been quietly reshaping you over time: helping you recognize what draws you away from his path, helping you to meet challenges that once seemed impossible, and always, helping you grow into a deeper relationship with him.

This week, may God continue to keep you in his care, re-forming and re-shaping you ever more in his image. And may you become ever more aware of his love and grace. Praise God for his constancy in a world that is ever-changing. Amen.