Title: Still Reforming
Text: Psalm 19
Theme: The Statues of the Lord are trustworthy
Occasion: Reformation Sunday, Nov. 1, 2026
Aim: I aim to help my people treasure God's Word above all.

God used Martin Luther to leave a lasting imprint upon the church. His study of the book Romans and in particular Romans 1:17 made him aware of that glorious doctrine of justification which truly is the doctrine upon which the church rises or falls. As Luther studied this text which says, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed." Luther began to realize that Paul was talking about a righteousness that God imparts to us. This is a righteousness that God gives to those on the basis of their faith who acknowledge that they have no righteousness and are in absolute and total dependency upon the righteousness of Christ to be credited to their account. This discovery by Luther, who at that time was a monk in the Roman church, was the point of his conversion to biblical Christianity and his conversion lit a fire that has not burned out to this day. Luther saw tremendous tension between the official church and the teaching of Scripture. The selling of indulgences became more than he could bear, he wrote out the areas of disagreement he had with the church, nailed them to the castle door in Wittenburg, Germany which called for a public debate and the Reformation was born.

One of the changes birthed by the protesting church was the placement of the platform furniture. Luther understood the importance of what we call ordinances, but he understood the greater importance of preaching, and therefore, moved the pulpit from the side, to the center of the platform. Not all Protestant churches follow that tradition, but we do, because for us it speaks of the primacy of the Word of God.

Another reformer of that era was John Calvin. Most of his ministry was spent teaching and preaching in Geneva, Switzerland where his church, St. Peter's, stands to this day. Across the way from St. Peter's church in Geneva is the "Reformation Wall" which is inscribed with these words, "After darkness, light." Today is Reformation Sunday. We do not remember this day because we are trying to turn the clock back 500 years. Nor am I trying to turn the church into a museum that lives the past. We draw attention to this day on the church calendar because it draws attention to a time in church history whereby God in His Providence chose to turn on the glorious light of the gospel. Today, we have gathered, not for the traditions, not for ceremony, though we have both traditions and ceremonies, we have gathered for the proclamation of the Word of God and because the entrance of God's Word gives light. It is the shining of the light of the Word of God that reveals the gospel and we teach the gospel because we are not ashamed of the gospel, in fact, it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." In Rev. 2, Jesus Christ warned the influential church of Ephesus, founded by Paul, pastored by both Timothy and the apostle John that they

were in serious danger in part because they forgot what God had done. Grace is no longer amazing when you forget what God has done in your life and in the church.

God used the teaching and writing of Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, William Tyndale, Ulrich Zwingli, Menno Simmons to bring the light of the Word of God out from underneath the suffocating layers of man-made religious traditions. Not only was the message of the gospel rediscovered, but with the invention of movable print in the same era, the Bible was during those days, translated into the language of the people. The match that was struck by Luther and Calvin and others was fanned into an inferno by the distribution of the Bible into the hands of the common person. Today, without giving it much thought, we have in our churches, in our language, in our homes, and this morning, in our very hands, the Word of God. Now that you and I have been given this Word, we have a responsibility, a charge, a trust as stewards with this treasure. My aim this morning is to call us to be faithful stewards of the treasure of God's Word.

Read Text: Psalm 19

Christianity is based upon revelation. We believe and affirm the doctrine of Sola (only) Scriptura (Scripture) which is, that God has an eternal plan to make known the mysteries of the gospel which He wishes to be known by us. If we are going to know anything with certainty, it is only going to be by Divine Revelation. Therefore, in order to know what to affirm or reject, we have to have an objective basis outside of us. That objective basis is the Bible. The Bible alone is our ultimate authority for what we believe and how we live.

1. **<u>God has Spoken in General through Creation!</u>** - Psalm 19:1-6

There are two ways in which God has spoken: general revelation and special revelation. General Revelation is God's witness of Himself being continually preached through what He created to all people. The first 6 verses of this Psalm of David says that God speaks through the heavens during the day and night. Every day is a different sermon, every night a new homily. God has been preaching a series in creation for the past 8,000 – 10,000 years or so and it is anything but boring or monotonous. Some people have looked into the heavens and have taken the obvious evidence for the Creator, and have stuffed that evidence into a box and have postulated that there is no creator. To hear them tell the story, we are here by a cosmic accident. Beloved, I have wonderful news for you. There is a God and this God has spoken. At the very least, the sermon that God preaches in the sky is that there is a God and He is very, very great!

Notice the pattern. Heavens and skies describe where, declare and proclaim describe how and the glory of God and the work of his hands describe what. In the next verse, day after day and night after night describe when, pour forth and display describe how, and speech and knowledge describe what. Therefore, verses one and two describe what is going on, verse 3and the first part of verse 4 tells us the result of it. God is preaching in the heavens and skies all day and all night by showing off the works of his hands

which are done to make His glory known. The result of this is described negatively in verse 3 by stating there is no language that has not heard, meaning no one is excused because God preaches everywhere. It is described positively in verse 4a by stating this is a great opportunity for people to see the evidence for God. Verses 4b through 6 speaks of the triumphant conquest of the sun, which is being used as a picture of the sermon of God. Like a champion it completes its course, like bridegroom it moves with majesty, like the sun it influences every in existence.

This sermon in the stars says that our God is great. But the sermon God preaches in creation is incomplete. As good as it is, we need more. God's revelation through creation is limited because we do not learn anything about the love of God, the essential nature and character of sin, our need for faith and repentance, or the content of our faith; which is our need for Jesus Christ demonstrated in his life and death and resurrection. That is why we need the Bible. The Bible is God's commentary on His own creation.

2. **<u>God has Spoken Specifically Through His Word</u>** (7-11)

Specific revelation or special revelation is the knowledge of God in concrete form given to a special person or to a particular community. It is a special message to a specific people. This is the message and we are the people. God has chosen to communicate to us through His word. This special revelation is the only way in which we can understand general revelation. In the deepest sense we cannot judge the Word, the Word judges us. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Heb 4:12). The Bible tells us that the Word of God is the light that enables us to walk in the ways of God.

We believe in Sola Scriptura. We believe the Bible is the source of truth not the church, popes, councils, doctrinal statements, creeds, confessions, dreams, visions, impressions, pronouncements, feelings, nor experiences. This Book does not merely contain the Word of God, it is the Word of God. And though we may preach and teach the Word with all the stammering limitations of our human nature, the grace of God does the miracle of the ministry, and through human lips as the preacher accurately speaks the divine Word, the hearts of the people are refreshed. That is why this time is so precious, so sacred, so holy and at the same time so full of joy. Our God wants to be known. The next 3 verses describe in six parallel statements ways God is known. Each statement has a noun, adjective, and a result clause.

A. **God's Word works Perfectly for Depressed People**.

"The law of the Lord (noun) is perfect (adj), reviving the soul (result)."

When Christ answered Satan's challenge he said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." How do we live? On the Word of God. Can you live with hope, even if everything that you want, or if just one thing that you want, doesn't go your way?

If you call me and say, I am discouraged what do I do? I will tell you what I have told so many, go to the Word. I may take you to the story of Joseph, David or Elijah. I may take you to Psalm 42, 43, 126, but I take you to God's Word because it works perfectly for depressed people. The word for "law" is a reference to the instruction of God's Word. The word "perfect" means completely or sufficiently. The word for "revive" is the same word translated in Psalm 23 where it says, "He restores my soul." As you can imagine, this one statement could launch a thousand sermons.

B. God's Word is Right for Wisdom.

"The statutes of the Lord (noun) are trustworthy (adj), making wise the simple (result)."

Paul reminded Timothy of the influence of the Bible in his life, when he was a child and said that, "from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

In God's Word we find principles that teach us how we ought to think. The reason God's Word is worthy of our trust is because it reflects ultimate reality. Ultimate reality is not what I perceive, but what God says, is. As I learn what is actually true and false, then I am wise. God's Word helps me to properly assess a situation. I fuss at you about wasting your life on social media. Here's one of the reasons why. Your phone is lying to you by not giving you wisdom. It tells you that you are not good enough, pretty enough, strong enough, successful enough, etc. There is truth to that, but who is? Who is enough? We aren't, but Jesus is. The Word reveals our need SO THAT we will run to Christ. The world exposes your failures to sell you stuff that will never satisfy. The wisdom of the Word helps you see that so that you no longer have an appetite for it.

C. **God's Word gives Directions for Joy.** (8a)

"The precepts of the Lord (noun) are right (adj), giving joy to the heart (result)."

This word for "right" is not right versus wrong, or right versus left. It means straight versus crooked. The idea is if you walk on the straight path laid out for you by God's Word, you will have joy. God intends for you to live with joy. Jesus said in John 15 to remain in Him and bear fruit. Remaining in Him is directly connected to your obedience (15:10). Then in the next verse Jesus says, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." When you think that you have found the perfect gift for someone, you cannot wait for them to open it. Why? You are excited for their joy. God has given us his Word that we might have joy, even in adversity.

D. **God's Word gives Light for Life. (8b)**

"The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes."

I spoke with a dad whose son, while nice to other people was disrespectful and mouthy at home. Now, what do you do with that? As we talked I suggested he do a little study and discussion with his boy in James 3. That way, his son knows that this is not so much about him and his parents, but him and God. Another benefit is since the Bible is the living, breathing Word of God, it goes to the heart! I can't reach your heart, only God does that. But, the neat thing for me was to watch the countenance of this father. His pathway toward this issue was now lit by the Word of God.

The last two describe the enduring power of God's Word and what our response and reward will be for treasuring God's Word.

E. **God's Word shows us what will last forever**. (9a)

"The fear of the Lord is pure enduring forever."

The fear of the Lord is another expression for the Word of God. It is pure and lasts forever. It is also certain and is 100% reliable to warn us from danger and will reward those who follow it.

F. **God's Word is certain and true to warn and reward**. (9b-11)

Jesus tells us that God's Word is about him. Jesus is the central figure and hero of the Bible. We could and should also say that Jesus is perfect and revives the soul. Jesus is sure and makes the simple wise. Jesus is right and causes our hearts to rejoice. Jesus is pure and enlightens our eyes and gives us true wisdom. Jesus is clean and endures forever. Jesus is true and altogether righteous. Jesus is therefore to be desired above everything because he is more valuable than anything else and sweeter than anything else and in treasuring him and knowing him we see what to stay away from and are rewarded with an eternal and satisfied life.

It is tempting to look back 500 years at the Reformation with frustration, particularly for those of you who grew up in the Roman Church tradition. The Word was not taught nor preached carefully. It was hidden behind sacraments and liturgy. You see how the imperial authority and hierarchy of the church became the voice of God instead of the Word. That's easy to see now. But we cannot get stuck in 1517. We have to keep reforming. Our danger now is not the authority of the church that keeps us away from God's word, but the authority and elevation of self as the supreme voice in all things. Having the pulpit in the center of our platform is meaningless if the Word of God does

not rule our hearts. You and I have to consciously order or beliefs, values, behaviors and priorities by God's Word.

Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands became hot beds for the Reformation, but today? These countries are spiritually dark. They are infamous, but not for the gospel. The loss of the gospel was not because outside forces persecuted them, but because they allowed other things to become more important. When we do not prioritize gathering on Sundays to hear God's Word, we are taking a step toward darkness. When we make excuses as to why we do not have to obey God's Word, we are taking a step into darkness. When we who know God's Word refuse to order our lives by it, 1 John tells us that we are in darkness.

Read the Word daily so you can sit in it and pray.
Read the Word weekly with someone else so you can echo it, do it and pray together.
Sit under the Word weekly so the voice God through his Word becomes the loudest voice in your life.