“Recalling, Re-forming, & Reclaiming”



Happy Wednesday Everyone,

 If I asked you the question “Who are you?” How would you answer? Maybe with your name? Maybe you’d identify yourself as so and so’s son or daughter, brother, or sister. Maybe you’d identify yourself through the context of your profession: a teacher, a nurse, a farmer, a business owner, retired. Maybe you’d identify yourself by your hobbies: a runner, a foodie, a musician, a fan of *(insert team name here)*. Maybe you’d identify yourself by a description connected to your faith: a Christian, a Lutheran, a member or friend of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

 So, let’s pause there for a second. What if someone asked you, “What’s a Lutheran?” How would you answer that question? Would you use words like grace, Martin Luther, Protestant Reformation, ELCA, 95 theses, creed, sacraments, baptism, communion, confession, forgiveness, catechism (I could go on with a list of words for a long time). Would you know where to begin if someone asked you “What’s a Lutheran?”

 We are one week away from an important month for Lutherans. The last Sunday of October is festival of “Reformation Sunday.” On that festival day we tend to recall the climate of the Protestant Reformation and what led a German monk named Martin Luther to kickstart a conversation that would forever change the face of the Christian church. We sing hymns like “A Mighty Fortress is our God” (written by Luther out of his influence by Psalm 46). Some congregations might have covered dish meals to celebrate the heritage of German cuisine, or simply to celebrate around a meal with each other. But do we really understand what it is we are recalling when we celebrate that festival Sunday. Do we really know who we are as “Lutherans?”

 I’ll be honest with you, though I’ve been ordained for many years now, I’m continually learning more about who I am as a Christian, as a Lutheran, and as a child of God. Continually, through experience, relationships, and the wisdom of people much smarter than I, God is guiding me and re-forming me and my identity as a follower of the crucified and risen Jesus. And I think we all should always be open to learning, growing, and being re-formed in our identity as children of God. It’s fitting to re-form or reinform our identity of who and whose we are, especially in a month where we will celebrate “Reformation.”

 Many of you participated in our study on the book of Revelation. And if you missed it, goodness, you missed some great conversation. So, starting on **Tuesday, October 7th**, we will have a study that takes place both in-person and on zoom around the topic of trying to answer the question, “What’s a Lutheran.” We will meet **every other Tuesday at 7pm.** So that I don’t stretch myself to thin, we will alternate weeks between the study on Lutheranism and our Beer & Bible Study. If you’re interested, mark your calendar accordingly.

 We will look at the climate of the 1500’s, some of Luther and fellow Reformer’s writings, the confessional statements that serve as the foundation of our Lutheran lens, and the “guts” of our order of worship to more deeply inform our understanding of “what is a Lutheran.” I’ll add, if you are interested, start writing down your questions! The more questions we have in our discussion, the better the conversation will be! There will be a sign-up available this Sunday where you can designate if you want to participate via zoom or in-person and a link will be sent out closer to October 7th.

 Through our discussion, the goal is that we can recall, re-form (or reinform), and with a stronger sense of understanding reclaim who we identify as, both as a church, and as followers of Jesus. It should be a fun opportunity! And we hope to see you there (whether in person or on a screen)!

The Peace of Christ be with y’all,

Pastor Vern