

The readings for Sunday, October 25, 2026:

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalm: Psalm 46

Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28

Gospel: John 8:31-36

Here we are, back at Reformation Sunday. Each year, as this Sunday of celebration approaches, I find myself thinking about what needs to be reformed and what should be preserved.

Perhaps you feel like we've been living Reformation, not just in the ELCA, but across denominations. Maybe you're in an angry space; maybe you're saying, "Hey, I have some theses of my own that I'd like to nail to a nearby church door." It's been a tough few years/decades for many of us, as we've watched our denominations wrestle with various issues. Maybe you find yourself feeling very sympathetic to the Catholic church of Luther's day, the Church that found itself torn asunder by many movements of reform.

Regardless of the side on which we sit with these recent struggles, we might find ourselves feeling a bit fearful. We might worry about schism. We probably worry that there won't be a place for us in the church that emerges from all of this.

We should take heart that the Church has always been in the process of Reformation. There are great Reformations, like the one we'll celebrate this Sunday, or the Pentecostal revolution that's only 100 years old, but has transformed the developing world in ways that Capitalism never could. There are smaller ones throughout the ages as well. Movements which seemed earth-shattering at the time (monastic movements of all kinds, liberation theology, ordination of women, lay leadership) may in time come to be seen as something that enriches the larger church. Even gross theological missteps, like the Inquisition, can be survived. The Church learns from past mistakes as it moves forward.

Times of Reformation can enrich us all. Even those of us who reject reform can find our spiritual lives enriched as we take stock and measure what's important to us, what compromises we can make and what we can't. It's good to have these times where we return to the Scriptures as we try to hear what God calls us to do. It may be painful, but any of these processes may lead us to soil where we can bloom more fruitfully.

We may think of that metaphor and feel despair, as if we will never be truly rooted, flowering plants. But rootlessness can be its own spiritual gift. The spiritual wanderers have often been those who most revitalized the Church, or on a smaller level, their

spiritual communities. The spiritual wanderers are often the ones who keep all of us true to God's purpose.

If you have been feeling despair, take heart. Jesus promises that we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free. You might not be feeling like you know what the truth is at this current point; you may feel tossed around by the tempests of our current times. But Jesus promises that we will know the truth. We will be set free. We don't have a specific date at which we'll know the truth. But we will.

Rest in God's promise that we are all redeemable; indeed, we are redeemed. Rest in the historic knowledge that the Church has survived times of greater turbulence than our own. Rest in Luther's idea that we are saved by grace alone. Rest.