

... Reformed ☩ Revived ☩ Reviving ...

☩ **You will know the truth.** (vv.31,32)

☩ **The truth will set you free.** (vv.33-36)

In the name of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, dearly redeemed heirs of the Reformation:

Quote: “There are no facts, only interpretations.” Sounds like a philosopher. In fact, this was Friedrich Nietzsche’s nihilist dictum that helped launch this “post-modern” age. If your mechanic treated your car like that, you’d never get down the road. You’d have to stop, reboot or replace you engine as some computer companies design their software. A doctor from China once set up her video camera on my desk and asked me to read from a medical encyclopedia. She explained that her hospital staff would expect her to know all the words. Chinese has no medical vocabulary except what the West got from the ancient Greek doctor Hippocrates. A few years later she said they saved lives with visiting surgeons from Minnesota because everyone in the ER was speaking the same language. “No facts, only interpretations”?

This is another reason I’m sympathetic with seekers. If “there are no facts, only interpretations,” then Pilate was right. “What is truth?” But is God really so unskilled, so unloving, so impotent that He cannot communicate clearly? Too many misdiagnose this as God’s problem. But He’s got a good goal in mind for us. To help us be ... **Reformed ☩ Revived ☩ Reviving ...** Jesus says...

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Would you be surprised to hear that Martin Luther wrestled with similar questions? Disagreeing with the Pope and Church Fathers like Augustine left Luther asking himself, “Who am I to think I’m right as if they were wrong?” Isn’t that an honest question? Fortunately, Luther had traveled to Rome, the “Holy City,” as a young monk. There he saw and heard of sexual abominations taking place in the name of Christ by those who were thought to be spiritual leaders. Masses by drunken priests followed the papal example of the Borgias. Later Luther wrote, “I would not have missed seeing Rome for a hundred thousand florins. If I did I should ever had been uneasy lest I might have done injustice to the pope.”¹ Sometimes it’s the bad examples that help convince you you’re on the right track.

Our Lord Jesus did not have to ask Himself, “Who am I?” Battles with church leaders of His day are mostly in the Gospel account of John. But Matthew and Luke’s genealogies show why they should have listened to Jesus. A few years ago Morgan Jackson traveled to Africa for *Faith Comes by Hearing*. He wondered why his interpreter spent 5-10 minutes talking before he’d start translating. The Africans said, “Oh, well, he’s giving his genealogy. If his genealogy is wrong, we’ll have to leave the village.” The Africans informed them that “if the missionaries would have told us the genealogy of Jesus, we would have believed in Him, but we did not know He was a real person.”²

Real indeed, but not just any person! Prophecies about Jesus began back in the Garden of Eden to our first parents, Adam and Eve. Through the ages God gave more details. The Messiah had to come from the family of Noah’s son Shem; Jesus did. He had to be born of Abraham’s line; He was. The eternal King had to come from the house of David; Jesus did. To be both God and Man He had to be born of the virgin; Jesus was. His ministry had to center mostly in Galilee; it did. He had to suffer and die for the sins of all; Jesus offered Himself at the hands of His fellow Jews and their Gentile rulers. The Messiah had to rise again from the dead, ascend to God’s right hand; all this He did. The Messiah must come once more to judge the living and the dead. He came the first time to suffer. No doubt He will come again in glory as the almighty Judge of all. How will you stand on that day? Only by faith alone!

¹ Quoted: *On This Day* – 10/30. © 1997 by Robert J. Morgan. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) www.Laridian.com .

² <http://www.myspace.com/auidobible> . Morgan Jackson, May, 2008 – <http://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/> .

Jesus had already fed 5,000 men, plus women and children with a little boy's lunch. Raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, healing to the sick – all these miracles were proof of God's kindness in Jesus Christ. Yet some turned away in unbelief when He told them He was the only Way to heaven. ***So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, you really are My disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*** (John 8:31–32 HCSB)

God's Word finally convinced Dr. Martin Luther. He nailed debate points known as the "Ninety-five Theses" to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, October 31, 1517. He could be wrong in so many ways, but Jesus promises that God's Word is always right. In the years of debates that followed, Luther pleaded with officials of his Roman Catholic Church, "Just show me from Scripture where I am wrong." Instead they relied on tradition and papal decrees, demanding that Luther recant. He asked for time, prayed all night, then stood up to every religious and earthly authority in God's Name:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

Salvation is not complicated. God wants everyone to be saved. Jesus is clear: ***"If you continue in My word, you are really My disciples."*** The truth is not a mass of human opinions and interpretations. Jesus says to continue in His Word and enjoy a wonderful consequence: ***"You will know the truth"*** – not as cold facts, but by personal experience. Earlier Jesus said, ***"My teaching isn't Mine but is from the One who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own."*** (John 7:16f HCSB) God's Word works ✠ Work God's Word.

The truth will set you free. (vv.33-36)

Jesus' fellow Jews were living in denial, as if not conquered by the Roman Empire. ***They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"*** This is human blindness in any culture. Some of you know WELS Hmong Pastor Pheng Moua. The Lord used Pheng to lead his grandmother, once a Shaman, to Jesus Christ. Wrapped up by faith in the arms of her Savior, Grandma Moua, visited her former clients. She told them to throw away the special bags of superstition which she distributed so many years. She shared with them the "peace of God" which she received in the forgiveness of sins. This sacred, settled *peace* she had never known before in spite of all who sought her spiritism. God's **truth** that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior **set** her **free** from guilt, fear and superstitious lies. She told everyone, confessing Christ.

This is our priceless heritage in the Lutheran Reformation. As Jesus puts it, ***"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."*** More literally, ***"Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."*** (ESV) We all sin every day and deserve nothing but God's wrath and punishment. But God's mercy chose instead to punish Jesus in our place. He paid our penalty and freed us from our guilt. Once you become convinced of this fact by faith, **The truth** has already **set you free**. You're no longer a slave to sin, but give your whole heart in service as God's righteousness. Jesus says, ***"Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."***

You're **free** to worship God without fear. ***"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."*** (1 John 4:18) You're **free** to pray for help by faith like the father who begged Jesus, ***"I believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"*** (Mark 9:24) We are **free** to bring our offerings in joyful, faith-born love that insists that we be allowed to take part with our gifts. You're **free** to worship God in the joyful eagerness of faith every day, more earnestly, more regularly on Sunday worshiping together. Ongoing Reformation makes us **...Reformed ✠ Revived ✠ Reviving ...** Others need what you have in Christ, ***"the Way, the Truth and the Life."*** Then they too can worship in the beauty of His holiness now and forever. Amen.