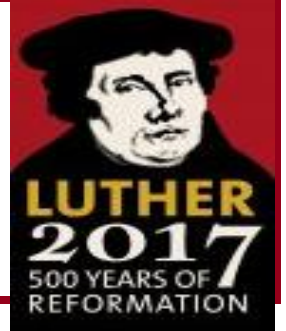


# Reformation Living and Giving

Dt 16:13-17 Matt 6:19-24 Colossian 3:12-25

November 12, 2017

Pastor Dave Bolte



As far as denominations and church bodies are concerned, we are in the small group that is as close as you can get to the Lutheran Reformation of 500 years ago. We belong to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; we are a conservative Lutheran church that unequivocally holds to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. *In theology, “conservative” means that you hold firmly to Holy Scriptures as the **authority** in faith and life; whereas, “liberal theologians” have long since abandoned Holy Scripture as their authority.* **In your theology, you want to be conservative!**

As a conservative congregation, we believe, teach, and confess that salvation comes by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Eternal salvation is a free gift from a good, kind, and generous God! It is Jesus’ work alone that saves us, not our own. His death and resurrection is the foundation of holy Christian Church. God’s forgiveness brings peace, life, and hope to us. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is **front and center** in everything that we do as a congregation and as individuals.

**That was the message of the Lutheran Reformation:  
The Lord Jesus Christ is front and center in everything.**

That includes your life as well. How you live your life reflects the Gospel. In fact, the Gospel drives us and motivates us in all things.

**WE KEEP JESUS FRONT AND CENTER IN OUR SPIRITUALITY.**

The Christian faith is not a *generic, vague* sense of “other-worldliness.” ***We do not worship some exaggerated Jesus that we mold and shape into whatever makes us feel good.*** Our faith is well-defined and totally grounded in Christ and His Word. **Reformation faith is firmly attached to Jesus, the Holy Son of God and the Only Savior of the World.**

- † Faith is formed and shaped by God’s Holy Word and His promises in the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion.
- † We learn from Christ and His Word the meaning and the blessings of worship;
  - we learn how to pray;
  - we learn the importance of knowing and believing Holy Scripture;
  - we learn the significance of being biblically literate and doctrinally sound,
  - we learn the urgency of reaching out to our neighbor with the Gospel.

*Jesus is front and center in our spiritual lives.* **Reformation faith is NOT going to church on Sunday and then forgetting about Jesus until next Sunday!** Reformation faith is putting Jesus front and center of all that you do and engaging with Christ and His Word through prayer, study, fellowship, and witnessing. Reformation faith is active! It is passionately engaged in the Kingdom of God! The Gospel drives us and motivates us in all things ... including our understanding of “spirituality”!

The Gospel drives us and motivates us in all things! Reformation faith also means that **WE KEEP JESUS FRONT AND CENTER IN OUR VOCATIONS.**

Reformation faith means that Christ is **front and center** in all areas of your life; all of your *vocations* are holy and sacred.

Your “vocations” are your callings in life; areas in your life where you have responsibilities. It includes your work – your trade, profession, and career; some of you are students; we are all sons or daughters; you might be a husband, a wife, a brother or a sister. You might be a leader; or you might be team member. We are all citizens of this country and members of this church. **Your “vocations” are the areas of your life where you have responsibilities.** Reformation faith means that those places, your *vocations*, are holy and sacred as **you keep Christ front and center in all you do.**

<p>Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. <small>COLOSSIANS 3:17</small></p>
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<p>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. <small>COLOSSIANS 3:23</small></p>
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Whatever you do, you do in faith; you do it as if you are serving the Lord! Remember Martin Luther's famous quote on *vocation*: **a mother changing her baby's diaper is just as holy and sacred as a preacher preaching a sermon.** Reformation faith means that Christ is **front and center** in all areas of your life; all of your **vocations** are holy and sacred when you do them in the name of the Lord Jesus and to the glory of God.

### **FINALLY, WE KEEP JESUS FRONT AND CENTER IN OUR GIVING.**

This is the time of year here at Trinity where we ask you to pray about and intentionally plan the giving of your tithes and offerings to our congregation. Our congregation depends on your faithful and generous tithes and offerings. Giving of tithes and offerings reflects the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Because of God's grace 500 years ago, we **DO NOT GIVE** our money to buy forgiveness or to impress God. **Indulgences** were a cruel false teaching that told people that they could pay money to cover up their own sins; or to help their dead loved ones escape purgatory. Indulgences were nothing other than a satanic false teaching used as a fund raiser to build St. Peter's basilica in Rome. **Martin Luther recognized indulgences as a lie and deception from Satan himself.**

Your tithes and offerings have **NOTHING WHATSOEVER** to do with **earning or acquiring** your eternal salvation. Rather, we give our tithes and offerings in response to what God has already done for us in Christ Jesus. The gift of salvation motivates the giving of our gifts back to the Lord. The gift of the Holy Spirit drives the use of our gifts in God's Kingdom. The abundant gifts of God's generosity teach us to be generous in giving of our gifts. **We keep Jesus front and center in the giving of our tithes and offerings.**

A recent survey indicates though that Christians barely respond to the Gospel in their financial giving. A cross-denominational study revealed average giving at 2.3%. **2.3%** That's a long way from the biblical standard of 10%. It's hard to call 2.3% Reformation driven giving! I doubt many

Reformation Lutherans were in that study. I hope that study doesn't reflect your giving either.

Give your tithes and offerings as a response to what God has done for you in Christ. That's biblical giving; that's Reformation giving! **Keep Jesus front and center in your giving!**

**FINALLY** ... maybe Jesus is **not** front and center in your life. Maybe you are **distracted** by the world; perhaps sin is **running wild** in your life; perhaps you are **too busy** with yourself to think about Christ and His Kingdom.

- † Maybe your spiritual disciplines are haphazard, if at all
- † Maybe Christ is not even a thought in your vocations and your daily life;
- † Maybe your giving of tithes and offerings is pitiful and is an insult to God and His goodness to you

If Christ is **not** front and center in your life, then **STOP! REPENT! TURN AROUND!** Confess your sins to God and believe that He forgives you in Christ the Savior. His death and resurrection forgives all your sins. Every single day is a new day of God's grace and mercy. **The sins of yesterday are forgiven and forgotten.** That Good News, that Gospel, changes you, it transforms you, and it gives you the desire to keep Jesus front and center in all areas of your life!

The **Lutheran Reformation**  
was all about putting Jesus front and center  
in the Church and its teachings.

**Reformation Living**  
is all about putting Jesus front and center  
in everything that you do.

***Make it happen in your life. Amen!***