

Confessions of a Lutheran: Reformation **REMIX**

Virginia Synod Faith Formation - Fall 2021

Playlist 1: Freed by Faith

Track 1: Freed by Faith Video by Dr. Vince Evers

Watch [here](#). (You can also stream directly from the website.)

Study Questions:

- Has this lesson changed the way you think about freedom? What does it mean to be a free Christian in Lutheran theology?
- In Lutheran understanding, our relationship to God is broken by distrust of God's goodness and care for us, and by doubt that God has redeemed us through Christ. Where do you see distrust of God in your life or in your community? How does trusting in God through Christ alone change our relationship to one another and to people outside the church?
- When do we as individuals and a community need to hear the Law? When do we as individuals and a community need to hear the Gospel?

Foundational Reading:

- The exposition of the Apostles' Creed in Luther's Small Catechism. (See pp. 354-56 in [The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert](#) [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000].)

For deeper study, you may wish to read:

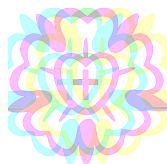
- Walter Altmann, "Luther at the Crossroads between the Old and the New," in [Luther and Liberation: A Latin American Perspective, Second Edition](#) (Minneapolis: Fortress: 2016), pp. 3-23.
- Berndt Hamm, "Martin Luther's Revolutionary Theology of Pure Gift without Reciprocation," Lutheran Quarterly 29, no. 2 (Summer 2015), pp. 125-161; currently available online at <http://www.lutheranquarterly.com/uploads/7/4/0/1/7401289/lq-hamm.pdf>

Track 2: John 8.34-36 NRSV

Jesus answered [the Judeans], “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

Track 3: Reflection by Joy Edmonds (Rural Retreat Lutheran Parish)

Freedom is having the ability to act or change without constraint. In the Oxford Dictionary it is defined as the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants. As Americans we are quite used to our rights, especially our individual rights and trying to ensure they are never perceived to be encroached upon. To be freed by faith as Martin Luther describes in his treatise *On Christian Freedom* is truly a radical life changing idea. “The Christian individual is a completely free lord of all, subject to none and a completely dutiful servant of all, subject to all. These may seem a contradiction but living out our faith in the Lutheran tradition has always been a theology that holds our lives and faith in tension. We believe in law and gospel. We are both holy and profane. All at once a child of God and an enemy of God. “The same was true of Christ who, although lord of all, was nevertheless born of a woman, born under the law and who was at the same time free and slave, that is in the form of God and in the form of slave.” The freedom of knowing our sins are forgiven allows us to love and serve our neighbor. As Paul wrote in Romans 13:8 “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, but love by it’s very nature is dutiful and serves the one who is loved.” I know everyday I will inevitably mess it all up but I also know I get another chance to try again tomorrow. This allows me to show not only love and grace to my neighbor but also myself. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said “Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God’s will.” And that to me is freedom indeed.



Track 4: Art



“Radical Love Healing Together”, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57867> [retrieved October 24, 2021]. Original source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/number7cloud/50022634161>. Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)



“Washing the Disciples’ Feet,” Figural series by Leszek Forczek, commissioned by the Bishop of Santa Rosa. Contemporary. [from TextWeek.com]

Track 4: Art Continued



Crucifix in Marktkirche (Halle, Germany) - Kelly Bayer Derrick, 2016

Track 5: Music

- "[Unshackled](#)" Ecclesia, with Kareen Vargas (2018)
- "[Canticle of the Turning](#)" ELW 723
 - Text: Rory Cooney, b. 1952, based on the Magnificat [Luke 1.46-55]; Music: Irish traditional
- "[All Earth is Hopeful](#)" ELW 266
 - Text and Music: Alberto Taulé, b. 1932; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946; 1993 Oregon Catholic Press
- "[We've Come This Far by Faith](#)" ELW 633
 - Text and Music: Albert A. Goodson, 1933-2003

Track 6: Continued Reading

- From [A Lutheran Welcome to Forgiveness](#) (Erlander, Daniel. A Lutheran Welcome to Forgiveness. AugsburgFortress, 2019.)
 - “In the love relationship, we are free. . .
 - from the law - from keeping rules in order to be thought of as “good.”
 - from perfectionism - loved as we are, we do not have to strive to be perfect in order to be acceptable.
 - from fear of death- eternally safe in God’s arms, the power of death is shattered.
 - from absolutes – we need not always be right or unquestioning – doubt and struggle are part of the life of trust
 - from domination – in God’s embrace, we don’t have to judge others so we look better – we don’t have to be above others or control others to feel worthy
 - from deception – we need not fake it – we can be honest about nation, culture, race, school, church, and ourselves – we are saints and sinners.
- From [A Formula for Parish Practice: Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations](#) (Wengert, Timothy J. A Formula for Parish Practice: Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations. Fortress Press, 2017)
 - (1) Timothy Wengert starts “Article Three: Getting Right(eous) with God: Christians Are Declared, Not Made” with a story. . .
 - He leaned over and whispered in my ear. Everything about that action was uncharacteristic for our culture and our relationship. He was my young next-door neighbor, Larry, a devout Presbyterian with a wife and two young children. And I was grieving, standing in the receiving line at the funeral of my wife of twenty-seven years, a widower at fifty. When Larry shook my hand, he leaned over and whispered, “Just remember, Tim, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He could not have known that my dear Barbara had chosen that very selection from the Gospel of John to be read at her funeral, which was to start in twenty minutes.

Nor could he have fathomed that of all the wonderful things said to me that day (and contrary to rumor and perhaps our own feelings of inadequacy, people really do by and large say the right thing at funerals), his would be the only comment I really and truly remembered. Hearing those words was for me like hearing the very voice of Jesus as he spoke to the grieving Martha in John 11...

...Justification by grace through faith alone is not a theory but an event, something that happens to us. Moreover, it is an event centered in a word, the Word, of God's promise. It requires dramatic stories like the one above in order to begin to make sense of it. More importantly, it requires the spoken, unconditional declaration of God's grace from one person's mouth to another person's ears. Although we may not often hear that Word in such a dramatic fashion or with such lasting results, it is nevertheless that Word, that in Luther's pithy language, does what it says: forgives sinners, comforts mourners, encourages the hopeless and helpless." (pages 47-48)

- (2) From "Article Four: God Does Not Need Your Good Works (But They Won't Hurt You Either)"
 - Ed and Mary Jo had four feisty kids; that much was certain. When they moved to town, she, a lifelong Lutheran, and her children joined the congregation immediately. Within a few months, Ed, who had grown up in the Roman Catholic Church, decided to join as well by taking adult instruction. The class always started with justification by grace through faith, and Ed, a big man who worked for the railroad, caught on immediately. "So, it's all a matter of God's grace," he began. "Yes, Ed," I replied, thinking to myself what a great teacher I was. "And there's nothing you have to do." "You've got it, Ed!" I beamed. Then he paused, "Well, just don't tell the kids!" (page 62)