

JOHN 15:1-8
THIS IS TO THE FATHER'S GLORY.

In the name + of Jesus.

In case anyone has the wrong idea about what we are celebrating today, let me say this up front: The Lutheran Reformation is not about Martin Luther, just as the Ten Commandments are not about Moses, the virgin birth is not about Mary, and the letter to the Romans is not about St. Paul. It is all about Jesus Christ. It has to be, or you are lost.

Jesus states this in plain terms: **“Apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)** Apart from Jesus, it is all nothing. All of your good works are nothing. All of your piety is nothing. All of your religion is nothing. In fact, apart from Jesus, they are all worthless. They are all filth. They are all cursed. And that is why the Lutheran Reformation is not about Martin Luther, or the Evangelical Lutheran Church, or any synod or congregation. It is all about Jesus Christ. It has to be, or you are lost.

The 95 Theses, and therefore the Lutheran Reformation, began with these words: **“Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said, ‘Repent!’ willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.”** Your whole life should be repentance. Not just once, but always. Not just for some things, but for all things. For, this is what the Lord says, **“There is no one who does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:12)** **“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20)**

Yes, the sinful condition is that bad. Nothing has changed since the Garden of Eden. Man still craves the forbidden fruit and longs to gratify his taste for sinful pleasures. God has given his commandments so that we would know what is good and what is evil. But man still strives to be like God. We still claim to know what is good and evil. We do what is evil, and we claim that it is, oh, so good.

Sin has cut us off from God. It has cut us off from He who is good. It has severed us from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. It has cut us off from life. And you know what happens when a branch is cut off from that which gives it life. It is **thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned. (John 15:6)** Because we are sinful, our fruits are rotten. Because of our sin, we are destined for death, the grave, and eternal flames. And still, we crave the forbidden fruit. We still have a taste for what is wicked and crooked. And we still call it good, because we like it – despite God’s watch, and God’s warning, and God’s wrath. That is why the whole life of a believer should be repentance. Repent, or you will perish.

Now, it is not the Father’s glory that you should be condemned for your sinful condition. God would certainly remain glorious if the whole world were damned; but that is not what gives him joy, and that is not how he reveals his glory. Jesus says, **“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:8)** But in order to show yourselves to be Jesus’ disciples, you have to be Jesus’ disciples. And this is where God’s glory is revealed – in sending Jesus to make you God’s people.

It is the glory and the joy and the delight of the Father that you are a branch that has been snatched from the fire. You will not perish in the flames, because he has grafted into life-giving Vine through your Baptism. It is there that Jesus grants you all that he

has won for you. In Holy Baptism, you have been united to Jesus Christ. He has given you his innocence, and he has borne your sin. Therefore, Jesus Christ was cut off from the Heavenly Father as he hung on the cross. He was condemned for your sinful cravings, for your rotten deeds, for your bitter words, for your rancid thoughts. He was convicted for your sin and guilt and shame. And because the Father cuts off every branch that bears no fruit, Jesus was cut off. There was no snatching from the fire at Calvary. Jesus suffered the afflictions of hell. He was forsaken by God. He was put to death because that is what the guilty deserve. The Righteous One paid for your guilt so that you would be pardoned.

This is to the Father's glory that Jesus has reconciled you to him. Now you are no longer cut off from God; you are united to him. Now you receive his good and perfect gifts. Now you have been given life. This is to the Father's glory; for, you have been given these things because of his boundless love. By his grace, you are branches who have been grafted into the Vine. You have been baptized into Christ. It is there that Jesus Christ has re-formed you. He has given you a clean heart and renewed in you a right spirit. He declares, "**You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.**" (John 15:3) You have been cleansed by the word with which he marked you, and by the word through which he absolves you: "*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" By these words, you stand blameless before God.

Jesus tells you, "**This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourself to be my disciples.**" (John 15:8) Do not let your heart deceive you and tell you how much work you now have to do to show yourself to be his disciple. This is not your work. This is the Lord's work. It is *always* the Lord's work. For, this is what the Lord says: "**I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**" (John 15:5) Remain in Christ and you will bear much fruit.

You will always need the juices from that Holy Vine. It is Jesus who has granted you life, and it is Jesus who sustains that life in you. He sustains you through his body which bore your sin for you. He strengthens you through his blood which purifies you of all sin. Through these, the Vine bestows nourishment into the branches. Through these, the Vine makes the branches fruitful. It is Christ who works in you to will and to act according to God's purpose.

And still, your life will always be one of repentance. For, Jesus reminds you: "**My Father is the gardener. ...Every branch that (bears) fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.**" (John 15:1,2) Your Lord continues to work repentance in you by cutting off and killing off everything sinful in you. He will not let you be comfortable with your sins. Rather, he leads you to despise yourself, to repent of your sin, and to flee from it. In this way, he binds you all the more firmly to the Vine because you recognize that your only hope, your only life, and your only good come from Jesus. And if you are closer to Christ, Christ will make you to be more like him. You will bear more fruit, and God will be glorified.

This is to the Father's glory that you have been grafted into Christ through your baptism. This is to the Father's glory that you have been cleansed of all unrighteousness through his word of promise and absolution. This is to the Father's glory that you are strengthened and kept in the truth faith through the body and blood of Jesus. This is to the Father's glory that you are redeemed and reconciled, reborn and renewed.

This is what the Reformation is about. It is all about Jesus. It has to be, or you are lost. But it is all about Jesus who has snatched you from the fire, and therefore you are saved. It is about Jesus from whom you have life, and therefore you bear good fruit. It is about Jesus to whom you are united, and therefore you have heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.