

Why We Should Study the Reformation

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Preacher: Jason Webb

- [0:00] Well, as Pastor John said last week, this morning we are going to start a series on Reformation theology, on the five solas of the Reformation theology.
- Those sitting in darkness have seen a great light. You've read Psalm 107. Maybe you're not sure exactly which psalm that is, but it's one of my favorite psalms.
- It's composed of four vignettes, four little pictures, four little stories. And so here they are. Some wandered in desert wastelands.
- They were hungry and thirsty and their lives ebbed away. And then others sat in darkness and deepest gloom. Some became fools through their rebellious ways. Some went out on the sea in ships.
- They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and he stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. And so in each case, people needed rescued.
- [1:22] People needed saved. They were in bad circumstances, in a bad state. And in each case, they cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard their cry.
- And so those who were wandering, he led them to a city where they could settle down and have homes and be at home. And then the others who were sitting in darkness in these dungeons, it says he broke the chains.
- He broke the bars of iron and he set them free. He stilled the storm and the waves were hushed. And in some ways, that's exactly what the Reformation was.
- It was a great rescue. It was a great revival. A light broke out in the darkness and prisoners were set free.
- They were set free. And the homeless and the neglected and the wandering were brought in. And so the Reformation was a great big, I love you to God's people.
- [2:34] To God's people. And that's why we should study it. That's why we should study it. We should study it because we need to say thank you for it.
- In each of those cases in Psalm 107, after every vignette in Psalm 107, it says, Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love.
- So for every rescue, there should be a corresponding thank you for your unfailing love. And then at the very end of Psalm 107, it wraps it up and it puts a bow on each of these circumstances.
- And it says this, Whoever is wise, let him heed these things. Let him heed these situations.
- Let him heed what dangers people were in and what distress people were in and how the Lord saved them. Let them heed these things and consider and think about the great love of the Lord.
- [3:37] And the Reformation was this big, I love you to God's people. It was a big rescue.

And so if we, if the Lord blesses the series of thinking about the Reformation and thinking about the truths that were recovered and the foundation of the Reformation, we will be thankful.

We will be thankful. Is it possible for people living 500 years away from those events to be thankful for them?

Yes. We're going to study them and say, you know what? These truths aren't just 500 years ago. They're not locked in a prison 500 years ago. These truths that were recovered. What God did and is worthy of being.

He's worthy of being thanked for. And then second, we should study it because it's it's God's work. It's not right for God to do something and then for us not to appreciate it to say, oh, that's long ago.

[4 : 49] That's old history. That's old hat. No, Psalm 111. Great are the works of the Lord. They are pondered by all who delight in them.

Glorious and majestic are his deeds. Great are the works of the Lord. And so the Lord did it.

The Lord did it for us. The Lord did it for you. The truths that we're going to be talking about are not mere points of argument.

They're not mere theological data for theologians to talk about. While we live our lives, the five solas that we are going to be talking about that God laid bare and brought to light again are not for talking heads.

They're not for seminary professors. They're not for authors alone. They're not for just pastors. They are for you. They are for you, for your comfort, for your hope, for your life, for your joy.

[6 : 02] Why? Because what the Lord was doing in the Reformation was bringing light to a huge number of people. And I can't emphasize this enough.

The Reformation happened in time, in space, in history. And it unfolded the way it did because God was caring for his people. I don't think we could even begin to imagine how dark and sad what it was like before God brought so much of this truth back.

There had been other reformed movements before 1517. I think that's something that you need to understand.

There had been other efforts at reform in the church before 1517. It wasn't like no one knew that the church was in a bad situation.

A lot of people knew that the church was in a bad state. And there had been other attempts before this. There had been other attempts. In the centuries before the Reformation, the bishops and the cardinals of the Catholic Church knew that this wasn't right, that the pope should have so much power and so much authority that he should be able to wield that kind of authority in the church and authority in the secular world.

[7 : 30] And so there was this, it's called the conciliar movement, where the councils, the councils of bishops and cardinals, they tried to take the power, reign in the pope, say this is what, this needs to be not so top heavy.

But that didn't really work. And then there had been monastic movements all throughout the Middle Ages. There had been monastic movements to try to reform the church.

And in some ways, they were, these monastic movements were a lot like the Pharisees. Remember last week what Pastor John said in the morning message? The Pharisees didn't start out as these bad people necessarily.

They started out saying, you know what? Israel needs reformed. Israel needs to go back and take the law more seriously. Israel needs something.

Well, the Pharisees started as this reform movement. But as you read your New Testament, you realize that they ended up just as bad as all the rest and maybe even worse.

[8 : 42] And that's what the monasteries were. They were man's attempt to fix this problem. There was this great spiritual problem in the conciliar movement, the monastic movement.

There was other movements. It was man's effort to try to fix this problem that everyone saw in the church, that everyone saw with Christianity. But none of it helped.

And none of it fixed the problems. Because they were all sort of surface level answers. They didn't have the depth.

They didn't have the truth. They never reached down to reform the people's how they thought and what they felt and what they knew about the gospel. And that's what man does when he tries to reform something.

What did Jesus say? They wash the outside of the cup. But they leave the inside dirty. They fix the outside of a person's life.

[9 : 46] But leave the inside in the same mess that it was in. And so many of the answers. And so many of the solutions.

Before the reformation. Before 1517. They were up here. They happened in discussions between the clergy. And theology was handled way up here.

Everyone else is down here. It's handled way up here. Between the clergy. Between this person and that person up here. And meanwhile. John and Sally.

Normal people. Didn't get anything. They're living their lives. And they're getting taxed.

And they're getting taken advantage of. And they got duped. And they got tricked. And they got lied to. And that's what really started it all. The German emperor.

[10 : 47] Needed some money. He needed some money. So where do you get money? Well you can either tax the nobility. Or you can find some other funds.

Source of funds. And really what the emperor came on. Idea was. People would sell indulgences. In his territory. Now an indulgence.

Was sort of like a. Shorten your stay in purgatory card. If you could buy an indulgence. You can either knock a whole bunch of years off of your stay in purgatory.

So you can get to heaven faster. Or you can knock the whole duration off. And go straight to heaven. If you paid enough. So Johann Tetzel. Was this man.

Who in Germany. Was given the authority to sell these indulgences. Like you can get out of jail. Free. If you pay enough. And so that's how the funding was going to work.

[11 : 42] The normal people. Who thought. Oh. Well I don't want to stay in purgatory. They pay their money. And the emperor. Would end up getting a cut of it. And so.

The great. Masses. Were fleeced. And taken advantage of. And lied to.

And that's. When. Luther decided to put his 95 theses on the wall. Or the door. That's what the 95 theses were about.

And then he basically said. Luther said. This isn't what Christianity is all about. This is. This is way different. Than what the Bible. Was talking about.

This is completely different. And he stood up. For. The sheep. He stood up for the people that couldn't read. That just had to believe what people said.

[12 : 44] Because. They didn't have any other access. And he said. Stop. Lying. Give. The sheep. The gospel. Now by this point.

He had begun to understand. Justification by faith. Alone. That was already starting to percolate. In his head. And he was beginning to understand. That. He had been studying. On his own.

In order that he might lecture. To his students. The book of Romans. And as he was. Studying. And. And thinking. And lecturing. On the book of Romans. He came to the realization.

That we are justified. By faith alone. Apart from works. Now. That. Seems very. Simplistic to us. We know that. But it was. A huge. Sea change.

For that medieval. For the medieval church. And so he began to understand. The gospel. And its simplicity. Simplicity. He had tasted the gospel. And the light had already. Began to flood in his heart.

[13:40] And now. When he sees. Normal. Sheep. People. In his. District. In his state. Being taken advantage of. He's ready to say.

Stop selling them. This fake. Bill. Of goods. Give the people. The real stuff. Now. All the earlier. Reform movements.

Never. Gave. The people. The gospel. They never gave the people. The gospel. All the earlier.

Reform movements. That happened within the church. At least most of them. Never. Reached down. And helped. And loved. And cared.

And served the people. Now. Obviously. There was. I do want to add a caveat. There were. Other groups. We heard about. The law alerts. The. There was another group.

[14:36] Called the valdencians. There. There were places. Where the gospel was. Clear. But. I'm talking. The great majority. If you're a normal person. You're not going to be exposed.

To a lot of that. But right from the start. The reformation was. Different. And that's why it's important to you. And that's why it should be important to you. And that's why we should care about it.

Because. If you care. About. The gospel. If you care about the fact that you. Need the gospel. And you rely.

On the gospel. And that your life. And your joy. And your comfort. And everyday. Activities. The reformation. Was God's way of bringing the gospel. To a great. The great masses.

About giving you the word of God. About giving. Hope. And joy. And peace. To the. To the normal person.

[15:33] To the common person. It was. It was about. God. Loving. The sheep. You see. The Catholic church.

Had it all twisted. Around. They had twisted everything. In the medieval church. It had gotten to the point. Where. The sheep. Existed.

For the shepherds. The sheep. Existed. For the shepherds. I mean. You see that with. The indulgences. The sheep. Are now this. This source of income.

That we can take advantage of. And. The sheep. Exist. To just worship. These shepherds. And give them power. And God hates that. God hates it.

Jesus said. The Gentile. Rulers. Lord it. Over them. But not. So. Among. You. And that's what it had become. Where to be.

[16:29] The Pope. Was to be the emperor. To be a cardinal. Was to be. A king. A duke. To have power. And offices were sold.

And it was all about. Lording it over. The masses. Listen to. Ezekiel chapter 34. You can hear. God's heart.

Not only for. Against the shepherds. But. I want you to hear. His heart. For the sheep. For people like you. For people like me. Who aren't great.

Who are just common. Ezekiel 34. As surely as I live. Declares the sovereign Lord. Because my flock. Lacks a shepherd. And so.

Has been plundered. And has become food. For all the wild animals. And because my shepherds. Did not search for my flock. But cared for themselves.

[17:23] Rather. Than for my flock. Therefore. Oh shepherds. Hear the word of the Lord. This is what the sovereign Lord says. I am against the shepherds.

And will hold them accountable. For my flock. I will rescue my flock. From their mouths. And it will no longer be food.

For them. Sheep. Don't exist for the shepherds. Shepherds. Exist for the sheep.

Shepherds exist to protect. And care for the sheep. People don't exist for their pastors. Pastors exist for. The sheep.

And so. It's not. Popes. And cardinals. And pomp. And show. And power. And lording it over them. It's about you.

[18:22] About the common people. And theology is for you. Your joy. Your peace. Your comfort. Your love.

Your life. It's about giving you food. About giving you light. Paul said. I will continue with all of you.

For your progress. And joy. In the faith. He has a real pastor's heart. And you know what he cares for? You know what he's living for?

Your progress. Your joy. In the faith. And that's what was recovered. The fact that the sheep. Matter.

You matter. Luther's strongest words were against. The false shepherds. And I'm going to give you. A bunch of quotes. From here on.

[19:17] To the end of the sermon. Or to the end of this lesson. They're pretty much all from Luther. So here. Here's the taste of his. His strong words. How he felt about the.

The false shepherds. Says. May God punish you. I say. You shameless. Barefaced liar. Devil's mouthpiece. Who dares to spit out.

Before God. Before all the angels. Before the dear son. Before all the world. Your devil's filth. You are a desperate. Thorough. Arch. You are thorough. Excuse me.

You are desperate. Thorough. Arch rascals. Murderers. Traitors. Liars. The very scum. Of all the most evil people. On earth. You are full. Of the worst devils.

In hell. Full. Full. And so full. That you can do nothing. But vomit. And throw. And blow out devils. Now. Why. And I can go on. Why.

[20:12] Is he so. Passionate. And so. Angry. About. These false shepherds. Because. While they were saying. They were shepherds. They were devouring. The sheep.

And if you care about the sheep. You don't like people. Who do that. You want to make a distinction. Because they had devoured. The sheep. And they had betrayed God. He said.

You're murderers. Liars. Traitors. Well. Who are they murdering? Who were they betraying? Who were they lying to? Who? They were lying. And murdering. And betraying.

People who couldn't read. People who didn't know. Any better. And instead of being cared for. And loved.

And taken care of. They were plundered. And devoured. And these were people. Who didn't know their right hand. From their left. And where's the Jonah?

[21:06] Jonah. And if you care about the sheep. You do get mad. When so-called shepherds.

Take advantage of them. Christ did. Paul did. True shepherds. Lay down their lives. For the sheep.

They don't betray them. And hide the truth from them. And lie to them. They don't ask. What's in it for me? What can these people do for me? What can I get out of him?

Out of them? And then it was all the rules. And the laws. And the try harder. That's all they gave to the people.

Because that's all they had. They didn't see the gospel. They didn't see good news. It was. And so it was never done. It was never over. For all these people.

[22:04] Listen to Luther again. They ruled with rigor. And applied God's law. With great severity. And moreover. They added their own commandments. As they still do.

And when these were not fulfilled. They raved. And condemned. So that they were driving. And driving. And exhorting. And exacting. Continually. That. Is no proper way.

To tend. And keep souls. Says Christ. Isaiah the prophet. Speaks of Christ likewise. Chapter 42. 3. A bruised reed.

He will not break. And a dimly burning wick. He will not quench. The bruised reeds. Are poor tender consciences. Which are easily distracted.

So that they tremble. And despair of God. He does not fly at them then. And trample them underfoot. That's not his way. That's not how Jesus.

[23:00] Shepherded people. The only people. He was really harsh with. Were the hypocrites. And the people. Who put loads. On other people's backs.

And then wouldn't lift a finger. To help them. And that's why you should care. About the reformation. Because. Luther. And all the other reformers. Were saying.

In everything they did. What about the sheep. How can we care for them. How can we bring them along. How can we love them. And that's Jesus heart.

That's Jesus heart. Because he came to. Lay down his life. For the sheep. And Paul. Said to the elders. In Ephesus. Be shepherds. Of God's flock.

And so. It was like the sheep. The normal people. They were all lost. Before the reformation.

[23:57] They weren't. Looked as. Important. But the reformation. Is saying. You matter.

The way it's going. With your soul. It matters. Your love. And joy. And peace. And contentment. In the gospel. That's your life. And that matters. And so.

That changed. So much. Of how they did things. That changed. How men. Preached. The word. It changed. What they preached. Changed. What they preached. Luther.

Again. Some preachers. Are lazy. And no good. They do not pray. They do not study. They do not read. They do not search. The scripture. In truth. You cannot read.

Too much scripture. And what you read. You cannot read. Too carefully. He's talking to pastors there. And so. That's how they. Preached. That's how Calvin preached. That's how Luther preached.

[24:55] That's how the Puritans preached. They preached. The word. Of God. They preached. The scriptures. And that was new. And that was different. To see someone.

Begin to. Systematically. Exposit. The scriptures. To say. Okay. This is where we were. Last week. And let's go on. Maybe you've seen. John Calvin's.

Commentary series. It's these 22 volumes. All they are. His preaching sessions. And so. It was new.

And people loved it. And people thrived on it. To hear. The Bible. Opened up. And explained. And so. What do people need? What do people need?

They need. The word of God. They need to put before them. They need it explained. And so. Before the Reformation. It was. It was either. Paltry.

[25 : 50] Stories. Figments. Of people's imaginations. Or fancy. Or fancy. Schmancy. Stories. Meant to impress. But there was no point. And there was no solid truth.

But the Bible. That's what was recovered in the Reformation. The preaching. Of the Bible. So now it's solid. Food. It's milk. It's bread.

It's meat. And with those things. People began to. To grow. And. It was the people. And them. Understanding it.

That shaped. How Luther. And Calvin. And other. The other reformers. Preached. He. Luther was incredibly intelligent.

So was Calvin. I mean. Many of them. Were extremely intelligent. But they never asked. Their audience. To catch up with them. And say.

[26 : 51] Oh you can't follow me. You can't understand what I'm saying. Well. Tough luck. No. They never asked. Luther never asked. For his audience. To catch up with him.

And. Instead. He said. A preacher should strive. For simplicity. And clarity. Simplicity.

Clarity. Clarity. That's beautiful preaching. And it wasn't boring. They weren't. None of them were dry.

Intellectual. Preachers. They weren't preachers. That like to use big fancy words. Or theological words. Without giving good definitions.

It wasn't boring. They didn't preach. They didn't preach. About things. They didn't talk about things. As people who. Hadn't experienced them.

[27 : 49] Or who didn't understand them. In their heart. They didn't preach. About things. They made people. Feel those things. And know those things. For themselves. And so. They didn't preach. About.

Going up mountains. They took the people. Up the mountains. They didn't preach. About the sunshine. They showed them. The sunshine. So they didn't. Talk about things. They brought people. Right to the truth.

Right to the truth. And did their best. To put it in their hearts. And that's. Reformation preaching. Because it was like.

We want these people. To understand. We want them. To get it in their hearts. And the reformation. Was this great big. I love you. From God. To his people.

And so. With the reformation. The Lord brought back. Jesus like preaching. Simple. Clear. Interesting.

[28 : 47] Engaging. I mean. The Sermon on the Mount. You can read it. It's so simple. So clear.

So engaging. And that. It was that kind of preaching. That the Lord brought back. Luther again. Luther. Christ. Had an extremely. Simple way.

Of talking. And still. It was eloquence. Itself. A good thing. To do.

It's a good thing. For all. Pastors to do. But it's a good thing. For any of us. To do. When. Look at the. Look at the. Sermon on the Mount. And look at what kind of words.

Jesus uses. None of them. Are like. Three syllable. Four syllable. Five syllable. Fancy words. Now that doesn't mean. There's no place.

- [29 : 42] In preaching. For bigger words. But. On the whole. Jesus used words like. Light. And treasure. And.
- Doors. He talked about things. That were. Normal. People understood. Christ had an extremely. Simple way of talking. And still. It was eloquence itself. Simple speech.
- Is the best. And the truest eloquence. Robert Elliot. Already. Gave you this one. Complicated thoughts. And issues. We should discuss. In private. With other clever people.
- I don't think of. Dr. Pomeranius. Jonas. Or Philip. In my sermon. They know more about it. Than I do. So I don't preach. To them. I just preach. To Hansi. And Betsy.
- Hansi. Hansi. And Betsy. That's what preaching is for. Hansi and Betsy. Are people that Jesus died for.
- [30 : 39] That he loved. And loves. And cares for. And so. If a seminary. Or any. Place that's preparing preachers.
- If all they do. Is prepare them. To talk to other. Seminary students. To. Then they haven't done their job. Hansi. And Betsy.
- That's who. Matters. In the preaching. And so. Luther cared for his people. And he wanted. Them to hear the word. He wanted them to understand it.
- He wanted them to get it. He didn't want them to lose it. And so. That meant. Not going too long. Because what happens. After too long. Of a sermon.
- Well. You. Your brain gets tired. It becomes easier. To wander. To me. A long sermon. Is an abomination.
- [31 : 35] For the desires. Of the audience. To listen. Is destroyed. So. An audience. Can start to want to. They can start with. I want to listen. And pretty soon. It's destroyed. Or later on.
- It's destroyed. And the preacher. Only defeats himself. On this account. I took Dr. Bugenhagen. Severely to task. For although he preaches. Long sermons. With spontaneity. And pleasure. I think what he meant.
- Was his own pleasure. Nevertheless. It is a mistake. In one place. Luther said. A preacher should have. The following qualifications.
- Number one. Ability to teach. Number two. A good mind. Number three. Eloquence. Number four. A good voice. Five. A good memory. And six. I find so amusing. The power to leave off.
- To know when to stop. Spurgeon had a student once.
- [32 : 28] Who went on and on. And. Went too long. And. The next time. That student.
- Had a chance. To preach. He asked. Mr. Spurgeon. What should I. What can I preach on? Or what should I preach about? And Spurgeon's answer is this. I don't care what you preach about.
- As long as you preach about 40 minutes. And. That's amusing. But that's good. Reformation. Preaching.
- It's caring. About the sheep. Spurgeon has other. Places where he says. You know. We sort of have this agreement. I'll take this much time.
- And you'll put in that much time. But if I go over. Then I begin abusing you. Anyways. Biblical. Simple. Plain. Interesting. To the point.
- [33 : 23] That's what God brought to light. And the people loved it. And the people thrived under it. And they flourished under it. And it was this big. I love you. From God.

And that's why you should care about the Reformation. Because the things that you enjoy so much. The gospel. And the simple explanation of scriptures. That's what God began to do again in the world.

And bring to light. Now. We're almost done. So here's the last little bit. Why you should care about this. Is because. It gave people their work back.

So you matter. The sheep matter. And what they do. With most of their lives. It matters. So. You can't.

You can't. And this is why I'm including this. Because you can't separate people from their work. Can you? You just can't. Say. This is what God has called you to. And that doesn't matter.

[34:21] And you matter. No. Both of them matter. Now. In the medieval Roman Catholic Church. In the medieval Roman Catholic Church. There was this.

There was this great divide. Between the clergy. And the laity. The clergy were doing God's work. Even though they weren't. And the laity. They weren't doing God's work.

Even though they were. And what happened. At the Reformation. Was the goodness. Of normal. Everyday. Work.

Was recovered. Your work. Your work. Your work. So selling.

Saddles. Selling eggs. Driving trucks. Fixing cars. Raising children. Being a dad. Being a mom. Helping patients. Teaching students.

[35:19] All the goodness. Of that. Was recovered. And given back to. God's. People. And. We're going to see. Reformation theology. Says. We don't need to do. Any good works.

To. Be. Saved. Good works. Don't go on. The first half. Of the equation. But that doesn't mean. There's no place for them. No.

That now. They're. We're saved. Unto. Good works. What does Ephesians 2. 10. Says. We're God's workmanship. God's worked in us. Created in.

Christ Jesus. To do. Good works. Which God. Prepared. For advance. For us. To do. No. God. Doesn't need. Our good works.

God. Doesn't need. Our good works. But our fellow man. Does. Our neighbors. Do. And. God. Doesn't save us. Because of our good works. But he does save us. Unto good works.

[36:16] And what is. Like loving your neighbor. And what is. What is the. Probably greatest. Most predominant way. That you love your neighbor. It's doing your job.

Job. It's doing your job. It's your way. Of loving. Your neighbor. So how do you love your neighbor? The biggest way.

Is to do what God. Called you to do. We're used to think of people. Of people. Of God. Calling people. To the ministry. So God's called this man. To the ministry.

And that's how he's going to honor God. By doing that. And that's true. But. It's really no different. For you. God calls each one of you. To a work.

To a job. And that's how God wants you. To do good. To others. So moms. Just being a mom.

[37:15] Raising children. It's good work. Selling saddles. Driving trucks. Selling eggs. Teaching students. Helping patients. That's all. Loving your neighbor.

It's doing good to your neighbor. Working in government. Police officers. Firemen. Congressmen. All lawful ways. To do good work.

That people. Might live. Peaceful. And quiet lives. In all godliness. And so. Where. Where is the church? What is the church doing?

Well. The church is here. And we're doing what we're doing today. In public worship. But it's every day. Serving and loving God.

And how do you serve and love God? With the. With eight out of. The hours out of your day. You're doing your job. And you're loving God. And you're loving.

[38 : 13] Your neighbor. Luther again. We conclude therefore. That a Christian lives. Not in himself. But in Christ. And the neighbor.

He lives in Christ. Through faith. And it is. And in his neighbor. Through love. Christianity. Works on two. Axes.

Faith in Christ. Love for the neighbor. So if you find yourself in a work. This is what Luther says. If you find yourself in a work. By which you accomplish something good for God.

Or for the holy. Or for yourself. But not for your neighbor. Then you should know that that work is not a good work. Do you see what he's saying?

All the monks were in their monasteries. Doing these good works for God. And who cares about all the other people? So that you're not doing a good work.

[39 : 12] For each one ought to live. Speak. Act. Hear. Suffer. And die. In love. And service for another.

Even for one's enemies. A husband for his wife. And children. A wife for her husband. Children for their parents. Servants for their masters.

Masters for their servants. Rulers for their subjects. And subjects for their rulers. So that one's hand. Mouth. Eye. Foot.

Heart. And desire. Is for others. These are Christian works. Good in nature. So loving.

Your neighbor. Doing. Your job. Is a good work. And so brothers and sisters. You can go out. You can go to your work. And you can love God.

[40 : 08] And you can love your neighbor. And that's God's gift. To you. And it's God's gift. To them. And so with that. We're going to end. We're going to end.