**October 29, 2017 “Reformation Sunday” Jude 1-4**

500 years ago, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed on the door of the “All Saints” church in Wittenberg Germany a document which contained ninety-five propositions about the nature of faith and contemporary church practice. Luther wanted to discuss these issues with those who claimed to be religious leaders of his day. Luther is credited with being the starting ember that lit the fire of the Reformation in Europe. This fact is not necessarily true as there were others like Jan Huss, Peter Waldo and William Tyndale who had tried lead those with whom they had influence into a more Biblically based faith than that which was being portrayed in both the religious and political spheres in Europe. The corruption within and without the Catholic Church and within and without the ruling authorities at that time is nearly beyond our ability to comprehend.

The monarchs who ruled at the time of the advent of the Reformation ruled at the pleasure of the Roman Catholic Church and oftentimes were executed for the sole purpose of keeping the kingdom Catholic. One would only have to read about Lady Jane Grey at the age of 17 ascended to the throne of England and Ireland who reigned for a total of 9 days before she was beheaded.

At nearly the same time as the birth of Reformation, there occurred what is known as the Great Schism within the Catholic Church. There was a great battle on who would be Pope. In fact, at one time there were three Popes all vying for rule at the same time. [Pope Alexander VI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Alexander_VI) (1492–1503) had seven children. The church had vast land holdings and controlled many areas through what were known as Papal States.

Compounding the problems were issues of simony which was the buying and selling of clerical offices. The fact that all services including the reading of Scripture were done in Latin, a language most of the peasants of that time could not understand. Praying to saints, relics and false teachings like the selling of indulgences by men Johann Tetzel who stated, “He promised the immediate release of loved ones from the pain of Purgatory as soon as a purchase is made. He even has a catchy jingle to make the point: ‘As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, The soul from Purgatory springs.’

In October 1517 some parishioners returned to Wittenberg with indulgences which they have bought from Tetzel – indulgences so powerful, some have been led to believe, that they could pardon a man who had raped the Virgin Mary. Many of the aforementioned things drove Luther to write out his 95 propositions.

But perhaps the one thing that gave life to the Reformation was not something spiritual or doctrinal at all. It was the printing press that was invented by Johannes Gutenberg. Within a few weeks copies of Luther’s theses were circulated throughout the entire area of Wittenberg and beyond. Interestingly, the first book printed by Gutenberg was the Bible unfortunately printed in Latin. Luther found that not to be acceptable and translated the Bible into German because he felt that all men should be able to read God’s Word in his own language.

William Tyndale came along a little later and translated the Bible into English. He, because of that work, had to flee England and later was strangled and burned at the stake in 1536. There were several Inquisitions at this time with the most infamous, the Spanish Inquisition. These types of things went on for years and finally seemed to burn itself out around 1648 which meant that this struggle went on for nearly 150 years.

Now some point to this time period and say that religion is the source of all strife in the world and therefore should be abolished altogether. However those who say that fail to take into account the fruits of secular humanism and its cousin… communism. It is estimated that over 50 million people lost their lives in the reigns of Stalin with another 70 million dying in the reign of Mao Zedong. Che Guevara is hailed as freedom fighter as was Yasser Arafat both of whom have the blood of thousands if not millions on their hands.

Remember that the Reformation was not a political movement but rather it was quite simple in its goals. The first one was the authority of the Bible. It, the Bible, should be the rule for everyone’s life and not some ecclesiastical rendition for a perceived benefit of the one who invented it.

 “Sola Scriptura” was the theme which meant that Scripture should be used to interpret Scripture. This teaching coupled with “Sola Fide”, which meant that anyone could be saved through faith alone in Christ alone was established as the basis for salvation resulting in eternal life in Christ.

The people who were involved in the Reformation made Jude 3 the foundational base of their lives. They would rather die than renounce what God’s Word clearly stated and many did.

The second issue of the Reformation dealt with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper or Communion as some call it. There were three views of the Lord’s Supper.

1. Transubstantiation… which taught that the consecrated bread and the wine literally was changed into the actual body and blood of Christ. Consequently, the unwashed masses were not allowed to handle the Eucharist nor were they allowed to drink the wine as it was literally the blood of Christ. Encapsulated into this teaching was that Christ did not fully pay for the penalty of our sins and had to be sacrificed over and over again for the payment of our sins.
2. Consubstantiation… this was the view held by Luther. This view stated that the bread and the wine while remaining bread and wine was also changed into the body and blood of Christ in a mystical event.
3. Significance view (I Corinthians 11:23-26)… this was the view of Wycliff, Zwingli and Calvin who stated the bread and wine were symbols of the body and blood of Christ. These items were to be distributed among the believers who were “to remember the Lord’s death until He comes”. The people were to remember that Jesus died for theirs sins fully and completely and because of His atoning death, the resurrection of the body is an assured event.

Now I will tell you that I have only scratched the surface of all that occurred in and during the Reformation but I feel it is important for us to know these things because of the events occurring within and without the walls of the Church today.

First, I will address the secular aspects of our society which I see at play in the United States today.

There are two competing world views. The first is that man is basically good and because man is basically good, he needs only to be nudged a little here and there to improve society for the good of all mankind. I see this being acted out today.

A recent survey of Americans stated that 67% of those who responded to the survey felt that it is not a requirement to be religious to be a moral person. Morality is a virtue inherently existent in the nature of man.

I find it interesting that the movement called “Antifa” or the anti-fascist movement of today uses the same tactics of the Ku Klux Klan. Faces are covered and violence is necessary to force those who will not toe the line to change in our society.

“Draining the swamp” is a manta we hear frequently as we view the spectacles of corruption within the IRS, FBI, DOJ. Lawlessness seems to be the direction of our land as many of those who have flaunted our laws seem to live lives of impunity. But my question is this, “with whom will you replace those impudent rascals?” John Adams stated that, “**Our** Constitution was **made** only for a **moral** and religious **People**. It is wholly inadequate **to the government** of any other.”

The other view is that man is a sinful fallen creature including those in authority. Consequently, laws must be followed and power must be limited. This was the mindset not only of our founding fathers in the United States but it was also the view of the Reformers.

On the so-called religious front, there are frightening vistas as well.

(Read the article on Protestant leaders)

Many of our so-called televangelists tout nothing more than I John 2:15-16

* Lust of the flesh
* Lust of the eyes
* Pride of life

NAR… New Apostolic Reformation… nothing more than revised ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Prayer walks, praying the labyrinth, the prayer of Jabez these things are no different than praying the rosary or think they will be heard for their much speaking.

Entire denominations are rejecting Israel and encouraging Anti-Semitism. Luther himself wrote, “Set fire to their synagogues or schools”, Martin Luther recommended in *On the Jews and Their Lies.* Jewish houses should “be razed and destroyed”, and Jewish “prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, [should] be taken from them”. In addition, “their rabbis [should] be forbidden to teach on pain of loss of life and limb”. Still, this wasn’t enough.

Luther also urged that “safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews”, and that “all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them”. Many feel that this view of the Jews leads to the Holocaust’s acceptance.

Lest we leave out John Calvin who many view as the patron saint of the Reformation. As I said to Andy this week, “you would not have wanted to live in Geneva with John Calvin”.

Here are some laws and facts about Geneva under Calvin’s authority:

\* Each household had to attend Sunday morning services. If there was preaching on weekdays, all had to attend also. (There were only a few exceptions, and Calvin preached three to four times a week.)

\* If a person came to the service after the sermon had begun, he was warned. If he continued, he would have to pay a fine.

\* Heresy was regarded as an insult to God and treason to the state and was punished by death.

\* Witchcraft was a capital crime. In one year, 14 alleged witches were sent to the stake on the charge that they persuaded Satan to afflict Geneva with the plague.

\* Clergy were to abstain from hunting, gambling, feasting, commerce, secular amusements, and had to accept annual visitations and moral scrutiny by church superiors.

\* Gambling, card-playing, frequenting taverns, dancing, indecent or irreligious songs, immodesty in dress were all prohibited.

\* The allowable color and quantity of clothing and the number of dishes permissible at a meal were specified by law.

\* A woman was jailed for arranging her hair to an “immoral height”.

\* Children were to be named after Old Testament characters. A rebellious father served four days in prison for insisting on naming his son Claude instead of Abraham.

\* To speak disrespectfully of Calvin or the clergy was a crime. A first violation was punished by a reprimand. Further violations with fines. Persistent violations were met with imprisonment or banishment.

\* Fornication was punished by exile or drowning.

\* Adultery, blasphemy, and idolatry was punished with death.

\* In the year 1558-1559, there were 414 prosecutions for moral offenses.

\* As everywhere in the 16th century, torture was often used to obtain confessions or evidence.

\* Calvin’s own step-daughter and son-in-law were among those condemned for adultery and executed.

\* In Geneva, there was little distinction between religion and morality. The existing records of the Council for this period reveal a high percentage of illegitimate children, abandoned infants, forced marriages, and sentences of death.

\* In one case, a child was beheaded for striking his parents. (Following Old Testament Mosaic law, Calvin believed it was scriptural to execute rebellious children and those who commit adultery.)

\* During a period of 17 years when Calvin was leading Geneva, there were 139 recorded executions in the city.

Why have I told you all these things today? Because we must not follow after men whether politically or religiously or adhere strictly to some pet doctrines but rather we must “contend earnestly” for the faith.

“That Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures”.

“There is only One Name given among men whereby we must be saved”.

“That if we confess with our mouth Jesus Christ as Lord and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead we will be saved”.

Many died to give us this Bible because they knew that the Word of God is, was and always will be the most powerful weapon on earth to change lives… including mine and yours.