

Reformation Sermon 2022 – The Steeple Murray Bridge

Luther – the pope – 95 issues to be reformed nailed to the door. October 31 - 505 years ago

Let's get one thing straight right from the beginning.

It was the Catholics started the reformation.

It was the Catholics who put their neck on the line to reform the church

It was the Catholics who wanted an end to the shameful corruption in their church.

It was the Catholics who tried to stop/relieve poor people from paying the church to forgive their sins.

It was the Catholics who tried to stop their church selling indulgences – little cash receipts - to have the sins of their loved ones, who had already died, forgiven.

Trust me it was the Catholics!

It was the Pope and Politicians who persecuted and killed the Catholic reformers.

It was the Pope and Politicians who kicked Luther and other reformers out of the Catholic Church.

Those who bandied together – in hiding – were given the name “Lutheran's” – it was an insulting name.

I think it's important to know Luther and the early reformers were proud Catholics.

What is a Lutheran?

A Lutheran is - a Christian yearning to uphold the one holy catholic church - true to the Gospel.

A Lutheran is a reformer.

A Lutheran is a closet catholic – so long as the catholic church is true to the scriptures.

We have along way to go – I think most of us have simply settled to be Lutheran's.

Luther was a catholic reformer – he would want us to be catholic reformers.

Presently we are most concerned about each having an equal share of the Murray Valley Lutheran Community pie.

But at the end of the day we are and always will be Catholic reformers – always aiming to uphold the Gospel in it's truth and purity.

Have you ever thought of yourself as a catholic reformer?

Of course “catholic” – as it says in our hymns book with the little asterisk, is the universal Christian church.

Truth and purity?

Do you realise how easy is to fall into impurity – I’m sure we do let’s look at Zacchaeus?

Zacchaeus – a tax collector.

We are taught from Sunday School that Tax collectors were bad people.

Matthew bags Tax collectors with “prostitutes and sinners”. (Matthew 9:10; 11:19; 21:31)

John the Baptist warned the tax collectors to stop collecting more than what was due. (Luke 3:12-13).

Tradition tells us Tax Collectors were standover men – extortionists.

It says: Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and was very wealthy – say no more. Jesus and Zacchaeus meet – it seems like an ordinary meeting – but it was much more – it says he wanted to meet Jesus.

No body, but nobody, wants to see Jesus – God – without the help of the Holy Spirit.

Zacchaeus would not have known this, but we do - he wants to see Jesus – he climbs a tree.

Jesus calls him down: “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

Jesus is coming to my house – he accepts me a standover man – a sinner?

He climbs down straight way and welcomes Jesus gladly.

The work of the Holy Spirit – without a doubt.

Zacchaeus responds to Jesus’ grace and love?

‘Lord! Here and now, I will give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’

The work of the Holy Spirit – without a doubt.

Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house...’

Zacchaeus responds to Jesus’ love and acceptance – with generosity.

Just too easy for evil Popes and Politicians to twist ever so slightly.

Dear Priest, God’s representative on earth, I have sinned much.

I have bashed and robbed. I have forced poor people to pay more than they can. I have made widows sell their soul to pay.

Dear priest, I am so sorry for my sins.

Dear sinner this is very serious – we have a biblical example for sin like this in Luke 19 – you don’t have a bible, you can’t read – let me read it for you.

“Here and now, give half of your possessions to the church, and pay back four times the amount you have stolen - This very serious.

They took Zacchaeus' innocent thanks offering and made it a law.
They misused the scriptures to exploit people looking for forgiveness.
The "sinful woman" – what does that mean? - she poured an alabaster jar of pure nard – worth a year's wages – onto Jesus feet in thanks for his love and acceptance and forgiveness – it was a thank offering.
Before the reformation her Jar of pure nard became a law.
The Pope demanded that "sinful women" should pay a year's wages to be forgiven.
Before the reformation they twisted and misused the Scriptures to become the richest organisation in the world.
Paying for sins and penances paid for the pure gold covering the doors and ceilings and roofs we see in the European cathedrals today

People yearn to have their conscience clear – they will pay.
\$10, \$20, a \$million dollars to clear your conscience.
A corrupt church cashed in on this.
A corrupt church used Zacchaeus' thank offering as a guide as to how much one should pay for their sins.
Jesus' love and acceptance is free -
"if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed." – we heard it today.
"You are saved by grace, through faith, and this is a free gift"
This is the foundational text of the little band of Catholic reformers.
Not money, silver or gold, but the free gift of grace.

The Pope gave his blessing to this little saying:
"Wenn die Münze im Kästlein klingt, die Seele in den Himmel springt".
(When your coin in the coffer clings your soul into heaven springs)
It's just not right is it?
"We are and always will be Catholic reformers".
We will always be reformers because somebody will always twist and misuse scripture.
As soon as we put must in a sentence we have misused scripture:
You must wear a gown – You must not wear a gown.
You must sing hymns – You must not sing hymns.
You must give 10%
My earliest church memories in Hahndorf–
Men and women must sit separately.
If you don't have Holy Communion 4 times a year you must be struck of the membership list.
"We are and always will be Catholic reformers".

Are you a Catholic reformer?

Are you committed to uphold God's word in it's truth and purity?

Slavery, the Holocaust - The worst crimes in history have come from the pulpit.

Before WWII someone wrote in a book called Mein Kampf:

...I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.

How evil can people be with God's word.

Thank God for those Catholics who started the reformation – risking their lives.

We are called to be catholic reformers until the day we die.

To be catholic reformers we need to be well versed in the scripture so that we can tell when someone is misusing God's word for their own benefit.

⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Amen;

Lord, we can so easily go off the rails with a slip of the tongues, with a stoke of a pen. Help us to be always alert to the misuse and abuse of your word. Equip us to be reformers – always. Amen.