

“FROM FORMATION TO TRANSFORMATION!!”

Reformation Sunday—A

October 26, 2014

Baptism

Pastor Tom Miller – Peace Lutheran, Grass Valley, CA

TEACHING POINTS:

1. I had a “drug” problem as a youth.
2. Under the “Old Covenant”, that of which Jeremiah speaks, there is a “drug” problem. It is called “hand holding.”
3. Things got there through “formation”, “conformation” and “deformation.”
4. There is a “new covenant”, one that is written on the heart, one that is internal.
5. This brings two more steps: “reformation” and “transformation.”
6. Our goal is really to be “transformed”, to be made new, to become one who is more than just “reshaped” from a deformed state, but one who is totally transformed into a servant disciple who is motivated from the heart.

You may have heard or read this little piece: “In Case You Didn't Know... I Had A ‘Drug’ Problem”

“I had a ‘drug’ problem when I was a young person and a teen-ager. I was ‘drug’ to church on Sunday morning. I was ‘drug’ to church on Sunday night. I was ‘drug’ to church on Wednesday night. I was ‘drug’ to Sunday School every week. I was ‘drug’ to Vacation Bible School. I was ‘drug’ to the family altar to read the Bible and pray. I was also ‘drug’ to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents.

(Those ‘drugs’ are still in my veins. They affect my behavior in every thing I do, say, and think. They are stronger than cocaine, crack or heroin. Many think if we still had these “drugs” the world would be a better place.)”

Under the “old covenant” there was a dragging problem. God speaks through Jeremiah about how that problem worked. “In those days,” God says, “when I took you by the hand.” Indeed, in those days, those days before Jesus, those days before the time of the prophets, in those days God took God’s people by the hand. God chose. God made a way in the desert. God walked in the wilderness.

It wasn’t that God wasn’t active in those days under the old covenant. It was simply that it was an act of law. It was about people being “drug” along. This old covenant had nothing to do with the will or even with faith. It had to

do with God taking by the hand and dragging folks along, even when they were kicking and screaming.

Let's take a step back and look at how things got to this point. Let's start at the beginning.

It all began when people were "formed." People were formed in His image out of the dust of the earth and breathed full of life. Formed by God's hand from God's Imagination.

But it didn't take long before these formed beings sought to be conformed. They wanted to be conformed into the image of the God who made them. They sought to be like God and ate of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

But, here's the twist, by seeking to be conformed to be like God, they became deformed. The power of sin had entered life and deformed the perfection of God's creation. The very image that they were and sought brought a deformation that caused them to want to hide from the goodness of their formation!

So that's roots of the "handholding" that has been common to religious tradition for centuries.

Today, however, is not about hand-holding or our "drug" problem. Reformation Sunday is about the reshaping and remolding and transforming that moves things into the heart, God says, faith and action "will be stamped on your heart." It is about the move to a "new covenant" reformation and transformation where the motivation is internal. God promises that the motivations will not be external. They will become matters of the heart growing out of a responsive relationship.

You see, under the gift of grace, it's all about the heart. It is about God entering into a relationship with us. It is about God coming close to us. When God is close to us, in us ("love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind), when God is all encompassing for us, then we respond, we forgive as we've been forgiven, we love as we've been loved, we reach out as we've been reached out to.

In that framework, we have begun a relationship that is beyond being formed, conformed and deformed. We have begun a relationship that is built on living out Christ's example of self-giving sacrificial love, a relationship that is written on our hearts in His new covenant.

We can use one word for that: "Reformed." We have been given a new form, a new shape. As His redeemed we have been reformed into a cross like shape, loving God and loving neighbor. We have been redeemed and bought back for our deformation caused by sin to be reformed into His likeness, into

the being of God's loving imagination. It is like mixing up a batch of cookies, like I once did, that didn't really work as cookies, so I reformed them into bars. Not so successfully, I might add!

That's where many of us would like to stop. In fact, that is where many of us do stop. Reformation is the end of the story.

Here is some news! Being reformed, remade, reshaped isn't all there is. There is a step beyond that. It is called transformation. It is about being made new.

You see, it really isn't enough to just be reformed. Reformation is just giving a new shape to something deformed. Reformation is about a change of direction.

Where we are encouraged to grow, though, is in the area of "transformation. Transformation involves a change of heart, not just an outside action but an inward framework. Transformation, gospel transformation, works from the inside out (written on the heart) rather than from the outside-in (handholding). Gospel transformation is a changed heart that results in a changed life, beating the rhythm of God's grace and lived in servant discipleship.

A motor home puts the conveniences of home on wheels. A camper no longer needs to face hardship or even go outside. A fully equipped home can be parked on a cement slab in the midst of pine trees. A motor home represents the possibility of new horizons. Decked out with home like convenience, nothing really changes. It's the old in a new place.

In the new covenant we are transformed. It is the new in a new place. It is a new heart with a new life with God. It is about being made fully new for God's mission, daily new for our servant walk with God. With God's power transforming our hearts, we find the faith walk to be a journey, not a station; dynamic, not static; public not private; powerful, not important.

The Bible is clear. God's mark is on/in your heart, you will show your discipleship by keeping the law, living the faith, being God's person. God will not take us by the hand any longer. God doesn't need to.

This new covenant is on the heart empowering us to live in faithful response relationship to what God has done, is doing and will do!!

Amen!!