

# REFORMATION DAY

Observed October 29, 2017

By Pastor Timothy Appel, Grace Lutheran Church, Smithville, TX

## THE HEART OF THE REFORMATION

Text: Romans 3:28

Objects: A hammer; some nails (if possible, a smaller nail that would be used to hold a sign, and three larger ones, to illustrate those used to hold Jesus on the cross); two signs (can be pieces of paper), one that reads "The Ninety-Five Theses" and another that reads "INRI."

Summary: The heart of the Reformation, and the heart of the Church still today, is the good news that we are saved because Jesus' perfect righteousness has covered all our sin.

On October 31, 1517, a German pastor named Martin Luther started the Reformation when he nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. **(Show hammer, nail, and "The Ninety-Five Theses" sign.)** That happened five hundred years ago. We are still remembering and celebrating the Reformation today because it teaches us the central truth of Christianity: we are not saved because we are good people who do good things. We are not saved because we give money to the Church. We are not saved because of anything we do at all. No, not at all. The central truth of Christianity is this: we are saved because of God's grace, that is, the undeserved love God has for sinners like us. We are saved because of what Jesus has done for us. That's the good news we hear in Romans 3:28, "We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

That means that our celebration today isn't just about the hammer and nail that Martin Luther used five hundred years ago. Our celebration today is really about the hammer and nails that were used on Jesus two thousand years ago. That hammer put nails through Jesus' hands and feet to crucify Him on the cross. **(Show hammer and larger nails.)** That hammer and another nail put a sign on the cross, above Jesus' head. That sign wasn't the Ninety-Five Theses. **(Show "INRI" sign and point to the letters.)** The letters you see here remind us that the sign said, "[I] Jesus of [N] Nazareth, the [R] King of the [I] Jews." The true King over all, Jesus Christ, came to die for us sinners. Jesus came as the Baby in Bethlehem so that He could grow up and sacrifice His sinless life so that we could be forgiven our sins. Jesus didn't do that because we were good enough and had earned it; He did it because He loves us. Jesus' gracious love for you and for me and for this whole world full of sinners is what took Him to the cross. By His death on the cross, our salvation is won. By His

resurrection on that first Easter, we know that we too will be raised from the dead. This is good news! This is the good news of our salvation. And we know that this good news is true for us because Jesus has promised it to us in His Word and in Holy Baptism. We are saved by grace because Jesus loves us, and we receive our salvation through faith, trusting what Jesus has told us is true.

That good news is the heart of the Reformation. That good news is the heart of the Church still today. The good news of Jesus Christ is why we're celebrating today and forever! (*Close with prayer.*) Dear Jesus, . . . thank You for the good news . . . that You have saved us . . . by grace through faith. . . . Amen.

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### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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