

1. What do you think of when I say, "Three on the tree?"

The three on the tree column shift manual used to be in all the old cars. In fact I remember having the opportunity to drive an old car called a Hilman that had three on the tree when I was just learning to drive. It was my great grandmother's car that she used once a week to drive to church and home again.

One thing about that car though was the shift from first gear into second gear – it was a shocker! It would grind and crunch and whenever we went out together as a family everyone in the car would wince as dad tried to get the gear lever into second gear. Once everything had warmed up, second gear was much kinder and before long dad would be changing up into third. Third gear was where you'd spend most of the journey, where you let the car do what it was designed to do.

Some people love driving manual cars – other people I know hated learning to drive a manual. After a bit of practice they would finally get the clutch and accelerator pedals worked out but then they want to stay in first gear! But you can't go very far staying in first gear can you? First gear gets you off the mark, but before long the engine is revving pretty hard and you need to change into second to accelerate away and then into third gear.

2. On this Reformation Day the question for us is, what gear is this Church in? And what gear are you in, in your own life as a disciple of Jesus?

Pray: God of Grace, you have so wonderfully designed and made us to live for you in all we do. Draw us back to your Word alone today - reform any thoughts and attitudes that are off the mark, revive us with a new passion and excitement for all your holy things and renew in us your purposes that we might lift our foot off the brake pedal and experience the wonder of you at work in our lives. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

Reformation isn't just a 16th century event that began on the 31st October 1517.

Sure, Luther's 95 proposals challenged the church of his day & had massive impact. Those proposals lit the fuse that began the reshaping and reforming of the church. It gave us a whole new expression of Christian faith.

It was a first-gear act.

It got a sleeping church out of the carport and onto the road.

It got things moving.

Tragically, many Christians are happy to stop and leave things there. They think Reformation is a great event in history that we come together once a year to celebrate. Is that the point of Reformation? No way! If that's it – **then the church isn't even in gear, it's stuck in neutral!**

Friends we're not a church that meets once a year with the sole purpose of remembering what happened through a bold monk named Martin in the 16th century – we are a Reformation church.

When I read *Trinity Lutheran Church* on the sign outside – I'm thinking:

Trinity Cairns is a...

- ***Reformation Church***
- ***An Evangelical church that proclaims and abides in the promises of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.***

The LCA is a Reformation Church. And Reformation isn't something the people of God only remember – but something we all participate in as we live it out its many and profound blessings.

It's a biblical call that goes way back...

3. So this morning I want you to try and recall the King from the Old Testament who was an agent of reform amongst God's people in the 7th C BC?

Can you recall his name from the first reading Rod read to us today? *King Josiah.*

Josiah came to power at a time when idolatry had run rampant.

- *Cult prostitution and child sacrifice had crept in.*
- *Criminal activity was everywhere.*
- *Merchants cheated their customers.*
- *Lenders took unfair advantage of their creditors.*
- *Widows suffered in poverty.*
- *Power was abused by those in authority.*

And along comes a little boy named Josiah – just 8 years old – with the call to be King of Judah. Could an 8 year old run this country? (Don't answer that!!)

Josiah is 8 years old and look at what he has to deal with!

But this 8 year old boy got to work. He ordered that the unused and decaying Temple be repaired and rebuilt. With a wisdom that could only have come from God, Josiah knew that if God's people were going to get up out of their mess, it would have to reform and rebuild. He knew it would take more than human determination – but an act of God.

While they were rebuilding the High Priest discovered a book in the Temple. They took this book to the King, and someone said, ***"I know what this is. This is the Book of the Law. This is Holy Scripture. This is what our fathers and mothers used and said was God's word."***

It was read to Josiah and he was moved to his very core. He ordered that the Scriptures be brought back to the people. Josiah commanded that the worship of the Temple be

reshaped, reformed by the words of Holy Scripture. Josiah rediscovered the Bible and reshaped his life and the life of the people according to its testimony.

That's first gear. That's reform.

Josiah got things reorganized, and he did it on the basis of the Bible.

What a thing for us to remember.

If God's Word isn't shaping your life, you'll be shaped by fad and fashion; or you'll be blown about by the winds of popularity. Is this where the church is at today? Is it where you're at? Are you living in the legacy of the Reformation, or is it enough **to say** that you're Lutheran or a Christian, **to say** that you love the Bible, and maybe rattle off the 23rd Psalm or the Lord's Prayer? Is that the fulfilment of all the wonderful promises of God in your life?

Your life - first gear - begins with knowing, living and breathing in God's word.

That's Reformation in action.

4. Reform, breathing in the Word of God leads to revival – which is second gear!

God's word is a powerful, Spirit filled thing. When Josiah the king heard down deep in his soul, what was in God's word, he tore his clothes, he wept, he cried out, and then started moving to action – to live out this reformation,

³ The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

- *They repented, they wept, they cried out, and they put reform into action.*
- *These tears are the best kind – the cleansing kind. They were revived. **They shifted into second gear and began to accelerate.***

For this 8 year old King and his people, it all started with a good clean out. It began in the temple destroying all the idols. They started with their own lives, putting right what was wrong.

They brought back the celebration of the Passover (that great act of redemption in the book of Exodus); they had moved so far from God that no-one even knew when Passover had been celebrated.

This was a huge movement in the history of God's people. We are told in 2 Samuel 23:25:

Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him, who turned to the LORD as he did - with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses".

When does revival happen?

- When God breathes new life into His church.
- When the people of God respond to His word and clean house.
- When they get rid of objects and attitudes that conflict with the teaching of Scripture.

Revival comes when God convicts people – and that happens because through Reformation people are reading their bibles!

They want to hear the objective and clear voice of the Lord.

God shows up and re-animates His people and gives them the perseverance and determination to do whatever it takes.

5. Josiah did an amazing thing bringing reform and revival to God's people – but it wasn't enough. It's not the fairy-tale ending we'd like to hear.

Twelve years on, Josiah died on the battle field and the people turned away from God and ended up in exile – in need of a better Reformation, in need of greater revival and in need of lasting renewal. Something God delivered through His promised messiah.

Isn't God amazing? Not an 8 year old boy King, not Martin Luther, but a baby in a manger – Jesus Christ.

Jesus who says to you today, *"...if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!"*

Through God's grace alone; through faith in Christ alone, God saved you [the bible says] through the washing of re-birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on you generously through Jesus Christ your saviour...

This is the real place of Reformation; this is where revival and lasting renewal happen!
In Christ!

Christ has won the victory for you. Christ has freed you by his blood shed on the cross. Christ has reformed your lives, breathed new breath into you through the waters of baptism, revived your souls and renewed you through the Holy Spirit.

Now God calls all of us together to live out his purposes in the world. To take His message to a world that is bound by so many things. God calls us to be agents of renewal in this place flowing out of His healing work in each one of us.

Renewal, acknowledging that there are broken lives around us, and that it is not our business to criticize people for how they got to be broken, but it is our business to help them. It is our business to be redemptive. It is our task to bind up the broken, to lift up the

fallen, to untangle the confused, and, most of all, to bring home to the Father those who left home.

- Renewal for mission.
- Renewal for ministry.
- Renewal for service.
- Renewal that takes broken and battered people and gives them a reason to hope.

Do you want to be a part of that? As people who are reformed and reshaped each week in worship, as people, who have the breath of Christ revive them each day in His Word, as people who are renewed as they eat and drink at the supper of the Lord, do you want to see God shift into third gear and experience life in the fullness of what God intends for you?

Where are you in your reformation journey today?

As we celebrate the call back to God's Word, to His grace – to Jesus Christ and His cross; is it time for a good clean out in your life? Is this an opportunity for repentance and renewal? Is this the opportunity you need to pick up the Word and hear deep in your soul the glorious sound of God's voice (like the sound of rushing waters) speaking directly to you?

Reform Revive Renew.

Standing together in Christ alone, will you be part of living each day as a Reformation Church? Amen.