

Explanation of the series

We are pausing our study in the book of Acts - which is ancient church history, 1950 years ago - and we are now going to be looking at some more recent church history, a mere 500 years ago, and the rich theological legacy that has been left to us.

For Christians in Ireland we have a somewhat uncomfortable relationship with the events that came known to as the Protestant reformation.

reasons why:

Historical violence and oppression under the banner of protestantism in Ireland

(battle of the Boyne etc)

-Contemporary sectarianism and ongoing hostility under the banner of protestantism in Northern Ireland

-The predominant Nationalist narrative implies that to be protestant is to be less Irish (Wolfe Tone, Douglas Hyde etc - I didn't know they were protestant - they seemed so Irish!)

-A noble desire to be biblical and not caught up in politics or religious squabbling

However, we are compelled to believe that during that time period many precious truths from the bible, which had been marred, distorted, forgotten or denied, by an unhealthy and abusive Mediaeval church were **reclaimed**, rediscovered and returned to their rightful, primary place.

Out of that time period of doctrinal renewal, and spiritual revival, and church revitalisation and reformation came 5 main emphases. People have collated the main teachings and distinctives of the reformers into these 5 slogans:

Scripture, Faith, Grace, Christ, and the glory of God.

Every one of their conclusions about put them at odds with the established European Catholic church.

And I believe that every one of these conclusions is faithful to scripture, and is in line with God's intention for life and spirituality.

Each subject that we will look at on these next 5 Sundays is controversial - and each one is true.

Why now?

We are coming up on the 500th anniversary of the event that historians agree sparked the flame of the Protestant Reformation, when a young German scholar and monk by the name of Martin Luther could no longer keep quiet about the abuses that he saw in his parish, and in his country.

The church was in a mess - and he believed that God had given him a message for his generation.

What got the ball rolling in all of this is two events. The first was very private, and the second was very public.

First and foremost - God saved Martin Luther.

He was a very religious man (a monk and a scholar) very aware of the chasm between the righteousness that God required and the sinful tendencies and fallen nature that he acutely knew and felt in his own heart.

He was taught that through good works and acts of piety and religious devotion a sinner could ascend closer and closer, higher and higher, towards God. *Working his way* into heaven, being helped by God's grace.

Reading from the Bible one day, he saw something that changed his life forever:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”” (Romans 1:16–17, ESV)

We’ll talk more about this in later weeks, but the gist of it that the good news of the gospel is that God gives His righteousness as a gift to those who have faith in Jesus. He writes that at that moment it was as if the door to heaven had been opened to him and he was born again.

Joy tinged with sadness - “*why didn’t anyone tell me this?*”

thinking of the wasted years, the pilgrimages, the acts of penance, the vain attempts to work his way into God’s favour - when it turns out that the currency of heaven is faith. *the Just shall Live By Faith.*

So having this private interaction between him and God mediated by Scripture; he resolves that this truth needs to be brought out into the public.

The second event involved some Martin Luther seeing this scriptural principal contradicted by a contemporary practice of the church that he belonged to: *the selling of Indulgences*, which implied that by giving money to the church you could shorten your stay in an imaginary place of torture called purgatory.

This was lucrative to the church but troubling to Martin Luther, who knew that the Just Shall Live By Faith - not by indulgences that you could buy so on October 31, 1517, he publicly posted 95 disagreements that he had, and was looking for someone to debate him on those points. Nailed them to the door of the Wittenberg Church to challenge the university staff, the priests and fellow monks, ANYONE, to respond and to engage in public debate.

The academic equivalent to saying “come at me bro!”

We’ll talk more about that in the coming weeks, but Oct 31 2017 will mark 500 years since the start of an important re-discovery of Biblical truth.

So in October of 2017, we are going to look at those truths from the Bible, rather than turn this into a history class.

Because, truth be told, Martin Luther was not a perfect man, and not *everything* that came out of the Reformation was positive. But God used imperfect people, and tumultuous times to raise high important truths for us to remember and for us to be guided by even to this day.

Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone.

What does that mean?

The Bible alone is our highest authority

Not that we reject other voices, or other sources of wisdom from the world around us, that would be foolish - but in matters of faith and practice, there is no higher voice, no clearer command, no other source of authority that comes close to Sacred Scripture.

Why?

1. **IF The Bible is God's Word then nothing can outvote it.**

1. Martin Luther famously said that a simple person armed with the Scriptures was more powerful & more of a force to be reckoned with than the Pope himself.
 1. the reason why he said this is because he *knew* that the Bible is no ordinary book it is the very word of God.
2. God is the Creator and Governor of the world and the expansive universe, as the King and Ruler of everything, He expresses truth about Himself, truth about His creation, and guidelines for our lives through His words.
 1. Our language is the way to make what is unknown known
3. When God speaks it is so important that it is "inscripturated" written down and preserved for all generations.
 1. It has proven to be accurate & reliable historically and archeologically, even prophetically predicting future events with amazing clarity.
 2. But not only is it truthful in the big scheme of things it is also intensely personal. God's word experientially works in the lives of individuals as we give ourselves to study and learn from it.
4. **But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.** 2 Tim 3:14-17
5. The sacred writings that Timothy grew up with were of course, scripture (OT writings) - we see that they are profitable for a variety of things (teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness) and the end result for the one who continues in them (v17) is that he is COMPLETE
what do you need to add to a complete person ? Nothing.
How many good works is he equipped for? All of them. (if there are any good works that God wants a Christian to do, then God must have made a provision in His word for training him to do it.)
6. Since We believe that the Bible is God's Words to His people, it stands to reason they need not be supplemented by any other writings in order to make up for any supposed lack in them.
7. **"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;"** (Psalm 19:7)
 1. an individual "soul-reviving"
 2. a progressive maturity "making wise the simple"
- 8.

Since the Bible is God's Word, that means nothing can outshine it.

2. **Since the Bible is God's Word, that means nothing can outshine it.**

1. The authoritative decrees of the King of the Universe carry weight.
 1. They are not the late night tweets of an angry president,
2. they are the careful, thoughtful, meaningful, insightful, truthful life-giving words from God Himself.
3. The same breath that brought the world into existence and filled Adam's lungs with life is the same breath that breathes out Scripture.

3. **Since nothing can outvote or outshine the Bible, let us pay careful attention to it**

1. our church architecture reflects this
 1. Our church architecture is functional and didactic. As you come here on a Sunday morning, you see that the pulpit (lectern) is given the primary location. You see in the order of service that the sermon is given the longest period of time.
 2. You contrast that to a Roman Catholic church and the pulpit is to the *side*, the altar is in the *front* of the church. The sermon occupies a short slot during the service.
2. does our lifestyle reflect it though?
3. But He answered, "It is written," "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every

word that comes from the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4

Jesus indicates that our spiritual life is maintained by daily nourishment with the word of God, just as our physical lives are maintained by daily nourishment with physical food.

To neglect regular reading of God's word is as *detrimental* to the health of our souls as the neglect of physical food is detrimental to the health of our bodies. In a similar example, **Peter** tells us **Like newborn infants, long for the pure**

spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation 1 Peter 2:2

Just like a baby needs its mother's milk Peter says that believers need the "living and abiding Word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). It is what we need to maintain our growth and health.

So can I challenge you this morning ? Since the Bible is God's Word, that means that nothing can outvote it in authority, or can outshine it in beauty, let us pay careful attention it. Lets carve out time to spend reading, thinking, praying, memorising, Sacred Scripture.

It is the start of a new month, why don't we start a new habit - *lets get into the Bible every day.*

Pick a book and read a little bit of it every day.

Proverbs 31 - Matthew 28 - Acts 28 - Deuteronomy 34 (kids upstairs are looking through some of that stuff) - Romans 16, but you can take 2 days per chapter.

It is so do-able: And it is so worth doing.

The is the words of our King - and they are ours for the taking.

500 years ago the vast population of europe thought of the Bible as a mysterious book, that was impenetrable unless you were a scholar or a priest... so they decided to leave that work to the professionals and trust what they had to say.

Today - we don't have to do that, we have His Word, we have His Spirit.

and we have the Word of the King in our laps.

He is a king who didn't just send orders from His throne but he walked into battle for His people, through the sending of His Son, He won our victory. Jesus' death was the death of death, His victory is our victory. His Kingdom, can be our kingdom.