1 Timothy 1:15-17 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

I think you will probably notice that for the next few weeks or so we will have a small series of sermons and worship services that highlight the Reformation. We will do this because it is the 500th anniversary of that particular event that sparked a change in the world. That event was the posting of the 95 Thesis on the church door of Wittenberg. That event (whether it truly happened or not) brought about great change in the Church and also in society. Now, I don’t care about the changes that were brought about in society and if you want to read on what that was there are all kinds of books and essays written to help you wrestle with that information. For me, the heart and core of the Reformation is what took place in the Church, what took place for souls!

For the last centuries In the church, for a number of reasons, the truth and wonder of the Gospel message of salvation had been lost, hidden, buried beneath a slew of manmade rituals, teachings and ideas that literally denied the people, denied souls the wonder of Jesus. The Reformation restored that wonder. For that matter, it could be clearly argued that the Reformation brought about five principles that to this day the Church really can’t live without. Those five principles are: Sola Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Gloria, Sola Fide and Sola Scriptura: By Christ Alone, By Grace Alone, By Glory Alone, By Faith Alone and By Scripture Alone! Please note, that as our series continues we will cover each of those principles to remind ourselves of what we have in our Christian faith and life. Our first Reformation theme will be **BY CHRIST ALONE!**

To begin, I want you to contemplate these words of Luther. *“When the question is under consideration how God is to be appeased, how forgiveness of sins may be attained, then either kiss the Son, or you will perish; there is no alternative. So John asserts: The wrath of God abides on him who does not believe the Son (Jn 3:36); again: “He that believeth not is condemned already” (Jn 3:18), whether he is a king or a shepherd, a Carthusian monk or a soldier, whether he lives in celibacy or in marriage, whether he is a doctor or a lawyer. If a man does not kiss the Son, that is, if he does not place his entire hope of salvation on the Son, he will perish by the wrath of God, though he kill himself with fasting and let his body be consumed with fire.” (SL 5,183).*

Pretty interesting words aren’t they? As you contemplate those words you finally come to grasp that Luther absolutely taught and firmly believed that without Jesus as your whole hope of salvation, then you really don’t have salvation. In other words, those words are clearly the beginning of our grasping the truth of the Reformation: **By Christ Alone**.

If you would, let’s think about what our phrase means as we consider the words of our Epistle reading. There the Apostle Paul wrote: “**Here is a trustworthy saying that deservers full acceptance; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”** Do you understand how much has been revealed in those seemingly simple words? First note that Paul wants us to grasp the full importance of what is said. He tells us right from the get go that what is said here is trustworthy, so trustworthy that it is something to be firmly grasped and adhered to. And what is it that we are to grasp as utterly true? **That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.**

Let’s dissect that a bit. Christ Jesus came. There is no doubt this is all about that God/man who was born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem at exactly the right time that the Father had set and established. This Jesus is called Christ not because of all the miracles he did or for any other fantastic sign he did as he walked this earth. In truth, this Jesus is only called Christ for one reason. He fulfilled and kept the greatest promise of God the Father concerning the Christ and in keeping that one promise, we then know that all the other promises are true too. The one thing that clearly and absolutely reveals Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God is his resurrection from the dead! That’s right, no resurrection, no real physical returning from death to life and you do not have a Savior. So just that name and title of Jesus found here already says so much and reveals his utter importance for our souls.

There is more. This Jesus came, entered into our world, came and revealed himself the Christ because of his resurrection. Now, ask yourself this, “What preceded this resurrection?” Again, pay attention to what our words say. Jesus came …to save! Jesus came …to save sinners! That’s what came before the resurrection! Today we call that work of Jesus: redemption!

Now you do realize that in our other readings for today we heard words that absolutely pertained to the truth of this Savior. For instance we heard Isaiah 53:4-6: **“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”**

Now I hope you realize that those words, 700 years old by the time of Jesus are clearly words helping us to grasp just what the cross of Jesus, just what the redemptive work of Jesus would be. He was going to die for our sins! His Father was going to strike, smite and afflict His Servant and the end result of that piercing and crushing would be our peace, yes, our wounds would be healed! In other words, Isaiah was telling us about the Messiah, the Savior of God and just what it was all about: our redemption. Upon Jesus all our sins are laid. Upon Jesus the wrath and anger of God the Father for all the sins of all the world would be punished and in that affliction we would be healed. Here is the whole point of Jesus. Christ Jesus came to save sinners.

Now if you would, let me once again remind you of something that I have found to be wonderfully helpful in wrapping my head around this salvation of Jesus. There would be those who say that it is our works, our obedience to God’s Word that is all the difference in salvation. But if that is true, then why did Jesus have to come and why did Jesus have to suffer and die? In the Old Testament God gave us law after law after law. You know what? We couldn’t do it, not even close! And you think God sent Jesus to give us more laws, more things to obey? No! Jesus came to pay for our sins. Jesus came to die on that cross that we are brought peace and hope and the confidence of heaven. Don’t tell me I have to have works or a good life or anything else like that because you are not giving me any hope at all. Tell me I am a sinner. Tell me, like Paul, I am the chief of sinners! Tell me as Isaiah says that Jesus was crushed for my iniquities. Tell me the truth of sin and my utter dependence on Jesus and his redemption.

Or are you going to mumble something about God is love and sin doesn’t matter and just do the best you can? No, we need Jesus. He came to save us sinners. But it is rather clear that if you consider sin nothing but your right and privilege because you were made that way or because you have a right to be happy…then how is Jesus for you? Paul calls himself the worst of sinners. Paul repented and stopped those horrid sins of persecution and still he calls himself the worst! We are told that this is done that we might grasp the fullness of God’s patience and mercy. This is done as an example for us…read what it says…not so we can revel and wallow in our sins but rather that we believe and have eternal life.

And that is what Jesus came to bring us, eternal life. Consider what our Gospel reading reveals about Jesus. John 14:1-6: **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** As you read those words especially at the end you realize Jesus is saying, “Hey, it is only me that will get you to heaven. It is not your works, doings or anything else. It is me!” By Christ Alone!

What Jesus has done and is doing for us is preparing our place. He is getting everything ready. He is building your room, your eternal home with Him and the Father. Jesus makes it clear that you need to believe this. He says to us: **“if it were not so, I would have told you.”** We need to believe Jesus. We need to believe his words and revelations. We need to believe his promises and grasp the hope He gives us. We do that by putting our faith in Jesus. And then, I am going to remind you that grace, faith, glory and scripture all have their hope and foundation in Jesus. But you will learn more of that as our series of sermons progresses. The bottom line as Jesus makes clear: **“I am the way and the truth and the life.”**

So, what are you going to say, “If Jesus is your Savior you had better live the right way!” I say, Since Jesus is my Savior, I see the horror of sin, the devastation of evil and the slave I am to Satan. Since Jesus is my Savior, I hear the promise of forgiveness and the hope of heaven in what He has done and accomplished. Since Jesus is my Savior, my desire is to please Him, to resist sin for his glory. Since Jesus is my Savior, though I am still the worst of sinners, though I fail to live to his glory, He grants me His peace. He forgives me, he loves me, he is patient with me, and He guides and comforts me. Since Jesus is my Savior, I grasp that He is the Christ, the Son of God and in Him and Him alone my room has been prepared, my eternal life has been granted. All of this because I simply grasp and rejoice in Christ alone.

Honestly, from the moment I first wrote this sermon, I have felt it inadequate and incomplete in laying out the marvel and wonder of Jesus. There is so much to say about Him. There is so much to know and hope in. And yet, I will not consider that my unworthiness in preaching will impact your gracious gift in Jesus. Do you know why I can say that? Because of the wonder of our text! **“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”** He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the One who makes all the difference for you and for me. Amen.