Exodus 34:6-7 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

Well, here it is Reformation Sunday. That is the Sunday when we as Lutherans sit back and give thought to the fact that the Gospel message of Jesus was once again restored to the world. So if you would, let me give you the condensed version of what the Reformation was all about.

By the 1500’s a sad thing had happened in the Christian Church. Because men are men and because Satan will stop at nothing to destroy the message of our Lord and Savior, the church, both the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church had lost the gospel. Those were the two church bodies that existed at this time and have since the 600’s. These church bodies came into being because the Roman church declared the doctrine of the Pope as the head of all of the church and because of this false teaching, the Greek Church broke away. As the centuries unfolded, the emphasis was less and less on God’s Word and truth and more and more on men and what they wanted in both church bodies. As a result, the message of Jesus and his redemptive work of salvation was horribly and sadly lost to many souls of the world.

From time to time there were those men who tried to reform the Church, that is, to bring it back to the truth of salvation by grace through faith but the false Church with its power and influence saw to it that the men and their message died. Until Martin Luther. When Luther came along, God was ready to help his church get back to the Gospel. So through political intrigue, an increased media and a pretty faithful Christian willing to stick to God’s Word the Reformation happened.

The political intrigue was brought about as the leaders and rulers of the day began to question the Roman Church’s grip on the world and politics, especially in light of some questionable and unbiblical teachings. Media wise, the moveable type printing press had recently been invented and because of that what Luther wrote, said and did could not be confined to just one area but within months most of the known western world knew what was going on and why. So though the Roman Church tried to put Luther to death, his German ruler protected and helped Luther and his reform. Now, all Luther wanted to do was reform his Church and help it get back to what the Bible taught. The Roman Church felt differently and the end result of all of this was the emergence of the Lutheran Church and also of the Reformed branches of the Church. All of this because of one man and his desire to know the wonder and truth of God. A man moved to stand on God’s Word, protected by his government and heard by the world.

Today we still enjoy the blessings and benefits of what the Reformation has brought. I won’t mention everything except the spiritual side this day. I am proud that as a Lutheran our church was founded by a man whose base confession was: *“Unless you can prove from the Bible that I have made wrong statements, I cannot and I will not take back anything. My conscience is bound by the Word of God. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”* Bear in mind that confession was made before the Emperor and Luther was well aware of the fact that his life was on the line. He stood on God’s Word, despite the threat.

That’s where the church of today still stands. Stands on the Word of God. Prove the church is wrong by the Bible and the Church will change her teaching, but if it is taught in the Bible, then God’s Word will stand. This is our Church and this is our faith!

Of course, it is easy to have such a faith when you have such a gracious and compassionate God. Our text, although the text for the 24th Sunday of Pentecost, is a wonderful Reformation text. It is wonderful because it reminds us of just who and what our faith is about! It is about the Lord! That will be our theme: **ITS ABOUT THE LORD. 1st. Who He is. 2nd. His Gospel. 3rd. His Law.**

Our text occurs when Moses goes up to get the Ten Commandments again. Our text is one where the Lord our God tells Moses he is going to proclaim his name. What does that mean? It means that the Lord is going to reveal who and what He is. So the Lord puts Moses in the cleft of a rock, covers him with his hand, and we are told the whole glory of the Lord passed before Moses. It was the hand of the Lord that protected Moses for the Lord makes it clear: **“For no one may see me and live.”**

It is after the Lord passed by, that is, after the full glory and wonder of God passed by that Moses then heard what God would have us know about Him. That’s why our text says, **“And he, passed in front of Moses proclaiming.”** God reveals himself. God tells us what it is we are to grasp and understand about Him and his ways. And what we are to know is awesome and wonderful.

Who is this God? We start with that simple yet revealing name he gives, **THE LORD**! This is the proper name of God, the name that in Hebrew means “I am”. It is so interesting to grasp that God’s name is really a verb form and in truth we could translate that form as “I am, I was, I will be.” It emphasizes the eternal nature and power of God. It tells us that this is a God who does not change or need to change for God is in all times and in all things. But even more important, this name reveals the God of free and faithful grace. This is the God whose love surpasses all and whose wonder encompasses all. And with that name laid forth, God then goes on and proclaims himself to a tee!

What is awesome to grasp is that God describes himself in terms of Law and Gospel. We will start with the Gospel side of the Lord, for that is what he reveals first.

God says of himself, **“the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”** Dear people, even to hear those words helps us to grasp the greatness of the Lord. To hear those words is to know that God is of the gospel, he is concerned with our good and with our souls. Let’s look closer.

God is compassionate. That means that God has sorrow for the sufferings of another. But more than that, compassion also means that God has a desire, a deep urge to help those with sorrow.

God is gracious. Please note this is a word used only of God in the Hebrew. This is an attribute of God, something that is his very makeup and being. It means he acts freely and without cause, that he is kind, charming and courteous. More than that is means he has unlimited and free love. God loves us because that is his nature.

God is slow to anger. I find great joy in this revelation of the Lord. It tells us of his patience, his ability to keep in check his righteous and just anger against sin and those who do it. God does not behave like we humans do, losing our tempers, acting in anger and foolishness at small and petty things. God takes his time. God grasps the situation and reacts appropriately. God is slow to anger.

God is abounding in love and faithfulness. I don’t know if we can fully grasp this one. The Hebrew tells us God is great in these things: love and faithfulness. His love who can measure? He pours upon us a love that is pure and flawless, a love that has no bounds or limits. It is love so awesome that Jesus came and willing took on hell for each of us. A love so grand that though God offers to share this love with us we can barely soak it in. This love is combined with faithfulness. That means that what God says, is, or promises is a fact. God sticks to the plan and delivers every time. In other words, God is sure and certain in everything and everywhere.

God maintains love to thousands. What you have to understand is that this word and the word used for love are one and the same word. Only here we are not being told it is great, here we are told that God maintains, he keeps, guards, and watches over this love. He makes sure this love is there and available to us for our sake and comfort.

God forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin. How fun to realize this word means to “lift, carry, or take.” By extension it then means that God lifts off, carries and takes away our sins. Yes, God forgives. He covers over, removes, and erases what plagues us. What plagues us is wickedness, rebellion and sin. The Hebrew says, “iniquity, trespass and sin.” God forgives when we don’t measure up, when we step across the forbidden line and when we do what is contrary to His law. What we need to grasp is that God is willing to do this, do this because of his love and grace.

Here is the God of the Gospel. The God who so loved us He sent His Son to die for us. The God who came and took on human flesh and blood to live the perfect life we could not and then offer himself in atonement for us. The God who made sure that all of this could be and is true because He has taken every step, He has done everything to assure and secure our eternal life and salvation. This is who and what God is.

Yet we cannot forget the final part of this verse. God proclaims of himself, **“Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”** Dear people, here is the law side of God.

The law side of God says very clearly and precisely that God will punish those who are guilty. If you have a fault, a sin, a trespass, a short-coming, a flaw, or anything like that that shows you are not perfect and holy, then you need to pay attention. Pay attention because God says such things must be punished and must be accounted for.

Now, before you get too excited, please note that this verse does not tell us that God unjustly punishes children. God’s Word, yes, his Law, in other places clearly lets us know that no child is every punished for what a parent does. So what is this verse saying? It is reminding us of a horrid human truth, born out in human statistics and facts. What the parents were the children often are and what the children are the next children will also likely be. In other words, if we are not careful our sins get carried into the next generation and get passed on and on. Statistically it is a fact in our world. Dad beats Mom, I can guarantee that the son will beat his wife. Kid gets abused, I can almost guarantee that that kid will grow up and abuse his children too. Drunks produce drunks, tempers produces tempers, liars produce liars and so on. The Lord is warning us against such ways and lives. He is warning us because He will not leave the guilty unpunished! He is the Lord and cannot go back on what He has declared. If you sin, you will have a problem

Unless….unless….you cling to the Gospel side of God. You believe that God for his own sake, yes, for the sake of Jesus, will forgive you. And God will! The key is faith. Believe what the Lord says. Believe what God has done for you in Jesus and you will not be guilty. You will not be guilty because God has forgiven you. Mind, there is faith needed here. Mind, there is the need to grasp what God says is right and wrong. Mind, there is God’s grace that comes in Jesus but if you don’t have Jesus you will be one of the guilty and you will face punishment.

There you have it, the revelation of the Lord our God. You can have his love or you can face his wrath. You can believe his grace or you can endure his punishment. You can be his child and heir of eternal life or you can be his enemy and face eternal fire. God has revealed his way and it is this way that the true Christian faith proclaims and believes. Amen.