

Sermon for Sunday, October 25, 2020 - "God's Beautiful Conspiracy"

Reformation Sunday - Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Decorah, Iowa
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[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

You will know the truth and the truth will make you free, says Jesus.

Questions about what really is "the truth" are all around us these days. We live in a time when basic facts are up for debate, when opinion carries more weight than research, when conspiracy theories and actual conspiracies run rampant.

These days "truthiness" seems to be the guiding principle. "Truthiness" is a term coined by comedian Stephen Colbert in his satirical TV show *The Colbert Report*. "Truthiness" is all about what seems and sounds right to me. It isn't based upon facts but upon opinions and political persuasion. It's easy to mock other people for ascribing to "truthiness", especially when you watch Colbert. It's easy to think those other people do that, but we know the truth. We want to imagine that we are more rational and logical, that we are more thoughtful.

Yet, all of us are susceptible to confirmation bias - the tendency to pay attention to things that uphold our own positions and ignore things that challenge them. We search for, interpret, favor and recall information in a way that supports our ideas. A neighbor who thinks dogs are inherently dangerous sees a vicious dog attacking an innocent person. Another neighbor, who loves dogs, sees the dog defending a family against a menacing stranger. Confirmation bias shapes what they see. If you assume someone is angry at you, you'll interpret all their actions in that light, finding numerous ways to confirm your bias. "She hasn't responded, I must have done something wrong", when really, she's just busy. Confirmation bias affects how we consume media, interact with social media, respond in the workplace, engage in politics and more. We fall into the sin of thinking we are superior to those who hold different positions. We fear others who are different from us because of our bias and prejudice. We get entrenched, entrapped and enslaved by all this, stuck in judgements, fear and anger. This sin prevents us from loving and serving our neighbor and God's creation. We need to be set free for lives of love and service.

Jesus promises that we will know the truth and the truth will make us free.

Yet, if truth is presented in just an abstract form as a set of propositions that we can accept or reject, that doesn't really help us. That just leaves us stuck in our own faulty thinking, bias, and desire to be in control. We need something to break through to us, to free us from sin. We and all of creation need to be set free from the power of sin.

God knows this and so God has begun a conspiracy. Yes, a conspiracy. Our triune God conspires to free this world from bondage to sin. Conspire comes from the Latin word *conspirare* which means to breathe together. *Con* means with/together and *spirare* means breath. To conspire means to

join together so closely that you are breathing together toward a common goal. It doesn't have to be a nefarious goal, though that's the connotation the word has taken on in modern times. It is about breathing together towards a shared purpose. This is what our triune God does within God's self and with us. God, within God's self, is relationship and community among the three persons of the Trinity. The three are joined so closely together that one way to describe God is as a beautiful conspiracy, a beautiful breathing together toward the goal of freeing creation from bondage to sin.

God does not have a nefarious goal, but God is disruptive. God intends to break through all that traps and enslaves in order to free, renew and recreate. God is, at heart, the most beautiful conspiracy. God is the truth that sets us free. And, God draws us into this conspiracy, into breathing together with our triune God so that we and all creation might be set free from sin. God doesn't just give us a bunch of propositions about truth that we can accept or reject.

Instead, God has come in Jesus to breathe with us, to join with us in being human, to be bound up in all of it with us. Jesus has taken on all our sin, all that traps us, all that keeps us separated from God and Jesus has broken its power. Now nothing can separate us from God. Not sin, not death, nothing in all creation can separate us from God, for God has shared in all of it with us. Sin and death seemed to prevail when Jesus was crucified, but God broke their power, raising Jesus to new life and setting us free for new lives of love and service. Though sin and death are still present for now, they do not define us, they do not have the power to keep us from God and neighbor. God, in Christ Jesus, draws us into life-giving relationship with God and one another

God also pours out upon us the power of the Holy Spirit, the very breath of God. The Spirit dwells and breathes in us. By the power of the Spirit, we are drawn into *conspirare*, into breathing together with God.

Beloved of God, in these difficult days there are so many troubling realities, so many nefarious conspiracies. Yet as Psalm 46 assures us, we need not fear. Our triune God is with us and always at work. Listen to this Psalm again and hear how God, the most beautiful conspiracy, works to break the power of sin, to be present, to bring saving help.

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,
and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;
though its waters rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken;
God shall help it at the break of day.
The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake;
God speaks, and the earth melts away.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.
Come now, regard the works of the LORD,
what desolations God has brought upon the earth;
behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.
"Be still, then, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth."*

*The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

In this Psalm, God speaks to us to say, "Be still and know that I am God." Be still and breathe and know that God is always working, conspiring to free, renew and recreate each of us, all of creation, and you.

God, who is truth, who is the most beautiful conspiracy, sets you free. Breathe in this good news whenever you feel afraid and overwhelmed in the days to come. You are set free to breathe with God, to love, to serve.

Let's take a moment to breathe and pray together.