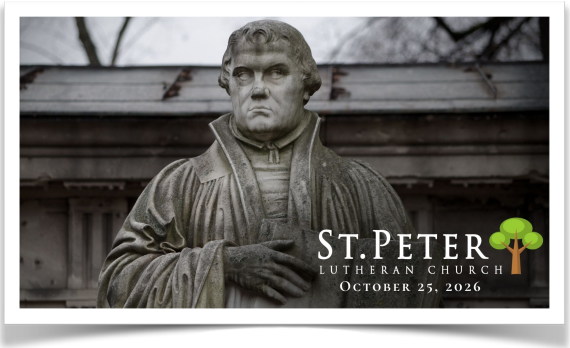


Live For The Gospel

A Five-Day Devotional
from Pastor Chris's Sunday Message

October 26 - October 30, 2026

The Reformation began with a question that still reaches our hearts today: Have I done enough?

Enough good? Enough praying? Enough serving? Enough giving? Enough believing?

Martin Luther struggled against a theology that made salvation depend upon human effort. He returned again and again to the truth of Scripture: salvation is not something we achieve. God has accomplished it for us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That truth still matters because we are surrounded by messages that subtly shift the focus back onto ourselves. We can begin treating God like someone we make deals with. We can confuse God's acceptance with permission to remain unchanged. We can even begin measuring someone's faith by how religious, enthusiastic, or impressive they appear.

The Gospel calls us back to something far better.

Christ has done the work. Christ gives the grace. Christ transforms us. Christ is the foundation of our faith.

And because that Gospel is worth believing, it is also worth living.

This Week's Truth

The Gospel is not about what we can do to earn something from God. It is the good news of what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ.

We are saved by grace. We are transformed by grace. We live by grace.

And by God's grace, we can stand firm and proclaim with our lives:

The Gospel is worth living for.

Monday, October 26 Ephesians 2:8–10

Grace, Not Works

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.”

There is something deeply exhausting about believing that God's love depends upon our performance. If we believe we must somehow earn God's favor, another question will always wait: Have I done enough?

Pastor Chris described this as one of the central problems Luther confronted. If salvation depends upon our own goodness, obedience, or religious accomplishments, we can never have real assurance. There is always another mistake to regret, another failure to remember, or another good work we could have performed.

The Gospel gives us a completely different foundation. Our salvation rests upon what Jesus has already done. Christ lived for us. Christ died for us. Christ rose for us. God's grace is not a paycheck handed to people who have performed well enough. Grace is a gift given to people who could never earn it themselves. That doesn't mean good works are unimportant. Ephesians says we were actually created in Christ Jesus for good works. But notice the order: good works come after grace, not before it.

We don't serve so God will love us. We serve because God already loves us. We don't obey in order to purchase salvation. We obey because salvation has already been given to us in Christ. That changes everything. Instead of spending today wondering whether you have done enough to deserve God's love, remember what Jesus has already done for you. Grace gets the first word. And grace gets the last word.

Reflective Thought:
Where are you most tempted to measure your relationship with God by how well you have performed? Consider this truth today: I do not have to earn what Christ has already given me by grace. How might believing that more deeply change the way you pray, serve, worship, or face your failures?

Prayer:
Gracious God, when I begin measuring Your love by my performance, bring me back to the cross. Help me trust what Christ has already accomplished for me. Then, freed from the need to earn Your love, let my life overflow with good works that reflect the grace You have freely given. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, October 27 Romans 5:8

God Is Not a Transaction

“But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

It's surprisingly easy to turn our relationship with God into a transaction. God, if I do this, then You should do that. If I pray faithfully, God should answer exactly the way I want. If I give generously, God should bless me financially. If I obey, nothing bad should happen. If I trust enough, God should remove my struggle.

Pastor Chris called this transactional theology—the idea that our relationship with God operates like an exchange in which our obedience, commitment, trust, or giving earns something from Him. The problem is that the Gospel doesn't begin with what we give God.

It begins with what God has given us. Before we could offer anything, God acted. Before we became faithful, Christ was faithful. Before we cleaned ourselves up, God loved us. Before we could make some bargain with heaven, Jesus went to the cross.

God certainly invites us to pray boldly and trust Him with our needs. But prayer is not a business transaction, and faith is not a tool for forcing God to give us the outcome we desire. Sometimes prayers are answered differently than we hoped. Sometimes faithful people still walk through illness, grief, disappointment, and uncertainty. Those circumstances do not mean God has stopped loving us. Our greatest evidence of God's love is not that everything in life goes according to our plans. Our evidence is Jesus Christ.

Pastor Chris emphasized that Christian hope rests not upon what we can give God, but upon what God has already given us in Christ. When life becomes uncertain, return there. The cross remains. The resurrection remains. The promise of everlasting life remains. And God's love remains.

Reflective Thought:
Have you ever caught yourself thinking, “God, I've done everything right—so why hasn't this worked out?” What would change if, instead of measuring God's goodness by today's circumstances, you measured it by what He has already done through Jesus?

Prayer
Heavenly Father, forgive me when I treat my relationship with You like an exchange. When disappointment makes me question Your goodness, direct my eyes toward Jesus and remind me how completely You have already demonstrated Your love. Help me live not to earn Your blessings, but in grateful response to Your grace. Amen.

Loved Too Much to Be Left Unchanged

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.”

“God loves you exactly where you are.” Those words hold a beautiful truth. You do not have to repair yourself before approaching God. You do not have to become worthy enough to receive His grace. Jesus continually welcomed broken, imperfect people. But the Gospel doesn't stop there.

Pastor Chris warned against what he called acceptance theology—“inclusion without transformation, belonging without becoming, or grace without change.” God meets us where we are, but His love refuses to abandon us there. Think about someone trapped in bitterness. Simply telling that person, “God loves you just the way you are,” may sound comforting. But if God's love leaves that person imprisoned by anger, resentment, and broken relationships forever, where is the hope? Jesus offers something greater. Freedom. Forgiveness. Renewal. Transformation.

Pastor Chris put it powerfully: “God loves him too much to keep him there.” That applies to every one of us. God loves us too much to leave us trapped in resentment. Too much to leave us controlled by pride. Too much to leave us imprisoned by selfishness. Too much to leave us hardened by anger. Too much to leave us exactly as He found us. Grace does not merely forgive our past. Grace begins reshaping our future. Transformation doesn't happen instantly. The Christian life is often a long journey of renewal in God's Word, strengthening by the Holy Spirit, forgiveness when we fail, and gradual shaping into the likeness of Christ. So today, don't only ask: “Does God love me?” The answer is yes. Also ask: “Where is God's love transforming me?”

Reflective Thought:
What is one attitude, habit, hurt, or pattern that God may be inviting you to surrender? Rather than feeling condemned by it, imagine placing it into God's hands and praying: “Because You love me, make me new here.” Where might God be leading you toward forgiveness, healing, generosity, patience, courage, or holiness?

Prayer:
Transforming God, thank You for loving me exactly where You find me, but thank You even more that Your love does not leave me unchanged. Search my heart and reveal the places that need Your healing and renewal. Give me courage to release old patterns, bitterness, pride, and sin. Through Your Holy Spirit, continue making me new and shaping my life to look more like Jesus. Amen.

Faith Is Not a Performance

“But Yahweh said to Samuel, ‘Don't look on his face, or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for I don't see as man sees. For man looks at the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks at the heart.’”

Some people can speak about their faith beautifully. Others struggle to find the words. Some people raise their hands during worship. Others quietly bow their heads. Some pray eloquently in front of a room full of people. Others can barely whisper a prayer when they're alone. Which one has stronger faith? We can't know by looking.

Pastor Chris described performance-based theology as measuring faith or holiness by someone's outward actions, enthusiasm, abilities, or visible works. Imagine two people sharing their testimonies. One speaks confidently and beautifully. The other stumbles over words and nervously tries to explain what she believes. It's easy to assume the first person's faith is stronger. But God does not grade testimony speeches.

Faith is not a performance. Your faith isn't more genuine because you use impressive religious words. Your prayers aren't more valuable because they sound polished. Your worship isn't more authentic because other people can see your enthusiasm.

Pastor Chris reminded the congregation that our faith does not rest upon our ability to articulate what we believe, how impressively we pray, or how much religious activity we perform. Our faith rests in Jesus Christ. This should encourage us when we feel inadequate. You don't have to sound like somebody else. You don't have to worship like somebody else. You don't have to pray like somebody else. You don't have to have somebody else's story. God knows your heart. Faith simply looks toward Jesus and says: “Lord, I trust You.” Sometimes that prayer may be confident. Sometimes it may barely come out. But Christ—not the quality of our performance—is the foundation beneath it.

Reflective Thought:
Whose faith have you been comparing yours to? Do you ever assume someone else's faith is stronger because they are more outspoken, emotional, knowledgeable, or visible? Faith isn't about looking faithful. Faith is about trusting the One who is faithful.

Prayer:
Lord Jesus, free me from comparing my faith with the faith of others. Forgive me when I judge someone else's relationship with You by what I can see, and forgive me when I try to prove my own faith through outward performance. Teach me to trust You sincerely and simply. Whether my faith feels strong or small today, keep my eyes fixed on You. Amen.

Stand Firm. Live the Gospel

“For I am not ashamed of the Good News of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.”

Martin Luther's stand at Worms was not simply a theological argument. It was a stand for the Gospel. When pressured to retract what he had written and taught, Luther refused to abandon the truth that salvation comes through God's grace rather than human works. Pastor Chris described how Luther refused to compromise because the truth of the Gospel mattered that deeply. Five hundred years later, most of us will never stand before an emperor and defend our faith.

But we still face opportunities to stand. We stand when the culture tells us that truth doesn't matter. We stand when someone reduces Christianity to earning God's approval. We stand when faith becomes a transaction designed to get what we want. We stand when grace is separated from transformation. We stand when someone mistakes outward religious performance for the measure of their faith. But standing firm does not mean becoming angry, argumentative, or self-righteous.

Scripture says: “Stand firm in the faith… Let all that you do be done in love.” Christian courage and Christian love belong together. Our goal isn't to win arguments. Our calling is to bear witness to Jesus. And there is an important difference between merely defending the Gospel and living the Gospel.

Pastor Chris closed with a challenge: “The truth of the gospel isn't only worth dying for. It's worth living for.” What would it look like to live for the Gospel today? Forgive because Christ forgave you. Serve because Christ served you. Love because Christ loved you. Give because Christ gave Himself for you. Welcome because Christ welcomed you. Speak truth because Christ is truth. Show grace because you live by grace. You may never have your own “Here I stand” moment before a great crowd. But you will have dozens of small moments today when your life can quietly declare: Here I stand. Here I trust. Here I love. Here I live for Christ. And those moments matter.

Reflective Thought:
Where is God asking you to stand firmly in your faith right now? Not aggressively. Not self-righteously. But courageously, faithfully, and lovingly. Then consider one final question: If someone watched the way I live this week, where would they see evidence of the Gospel?

Prayer:
Almighty God, keep me steadfast in Your Word. Give me courage to stand firmly for the truth of the Gospel without becoming proud, harsh, or unloving. Help me remember that Jesus has already accomplished everything necessary for my salvation. Let that grace. Amen.

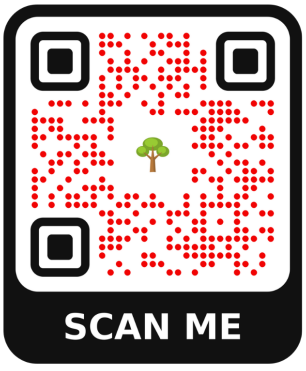
A Little Encouragement to Share

If these devotional reflections have encouraged you, challenged you, or helped you see God's Word in a new way, consider sharing this booklet with a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone who might need a little encouragement this week.

Sometimes a simple word of faith can make a difference.

Want to hear more?
Watch the message that inspired this week's devotional and continue the journey with us in worship.

Scan the QR code or visit:
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You're Always Welcome at St. Peter

We would love to have you worship with us. Whether you've been part of our church family for years or you're simply looking for a place to worship, you are welcome here.

Sunday Worship
8:25 AM — Blended Worship
10:30 AM — Traditional Worship

Pastor Christopher Metze
St. Peter Lutheran Church
Chapin, South Carolina

Come as you are. Come worship. Come grow with us.

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