

REFORMATION SUNDAY

Romans 3:19-28
October 28, 2007

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In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In October of 1530, Martin Luther wrote these words:

*Next to theology no art is equal to music;
for it is the only one, except theology,
which is able to give a quiet and happy mind. . .
The devil. . .almost flees from the sound of music
as he does from the word of theology.
This is the reason why the prophets practiced music
more than any art
and did not put their theology in geometry,
into arithmetic, or into astronomy,
but into music,
intimately uniting theology and music.*

Luther's emphasis on the importance of music in the life of a Christian has had a profound impact on the Church. Not only did Luther compose hymns, he encouraged others to compose as well. And he had a profound influence on the nature of Reformation hymnody.

For instance, an archetypical Lutheran hymn does *not* focus on you or on me. It does *not* focus on our experience, or on our emotions. Instead, an archetypical Lutheran hymn focuses on God, and what he has done and continues to do for us in Jesus Christ.

Lutheran hymns typically serve two main purposes. First and foremost, to glorify God. And second, to teach the faith, to accurately and steadfastly proclaim the truth of God's revelation in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps one of the finest examples of this is our Hymn of the Day, #287 *Salvation unto Us Has Come*. Based on today's Second Reading from the 3rd chapter of Romans, Paul Speratus wrote this hymn in 1523.

Speratus was a priest in Bavaria, who early on became influenced by Luther's evangelical reform. Because of his support for the Reformation, Speratus was dismissed from his position, and was even imprisoned for a time. Eventually, in 1529 he became the Lutheran bishop of Pomesania, and served there until his death in 1551.

His hymn *Salvation unto Us Has Come*, is a forthright proclamation of precisely how salvation comes to us — as a *gift*, through God's grace in Jesus Christ. And this hymn also delineates our Lutheran understanding of the proper use of the Law and the Gospel. God's Law is quite necessary and serves the purpose of making us realize our sin. But the Law does not, and cannot justify us, or bring us a right relationship with God. That only comes about through the Gospel. Justification comes as sheer gift, through the sacrificial death of Jesus on

the cross.

Let us then join our voices in praising God and proclaiming this marvelous truth.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.