

-As it has been mentioned before, a week ago today, Abby and I were pretty sick. I'll spare you the details of what it feels like to throw up as I am sure most of you have been there before. Though I hate with a passion the feeling of being nauseous, a new awful experience that I would now be exposed to was the experience of absolute tiredness in relation to caring for a 7 month old. Abby and I both described it as feeling like we had been "hit by a truck". Soren, on the other hand, though he could probably sense that his parents were not "all there", was doing fine and living the way all healthy infants do. I have a distinct memory of Abby handing me Soren to go change his diaper and taking a second to gather myself. Soren's bedroom and changing table are on the second floor of our house and it was all I could do to carry him up those stairs to go change him. Abby and I traded off entertaining the little guy while the other slept and both had to jump at the opportunity to sleep during Soren's naps.

-Turns out we can't schedule being sick in our daily lives and so when we become so sick we can't move, then we have no choice but to make room in our lives for it and reschedule a bunch of things (like leading worship last week and bunch of appointments that I still haven't made up this week).

-I have come to find out that for many of us here in this room who live very active lives, being sick or injured is the worst type of punishment not because you feel awful, but because your life has been forced to be slowed down to nothing.

-Following this experience of being so tired that it was hard to care for my baby, I am finding a new perspective with which to approach these Reformation Sunday texts, particularly Luther's favorite psalm: Psalm 46. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46: 10) Be *still* and know that I am God. Another way of translating the hebrew here would be "sink down" or "release". "Sink down and know that I am God". Of course, we in the 21st century like to rationalize what it means to "know God". We put it into the same category as "believing", "comprehending", or "understanding": it's all heady stuff. But to the ancient Israelites, "knowing" was much more deep than just "pondering facts in a classroom". I looked up the word "to know" (yaw-dah) used here in my handy-dandy online Hebrew dictionary and it spit out 128 possible ways to translate it. The first most common translation of it is "to know" like we have here, the second most common is: "to experience" or "take in". "Sink down and experience that I am God".

-I don't know about you, but this invitation scares the living *bleep out of me. Jesus says: "let the little children come", I can get behind that. "Love your neighbor as yourself", you got it. "First shall be last and last shall be first", well... OK I can get there. But this one: "be still and experience that I am God"....not only do I not have the time (especially as a working millennial) but I don't know HOW to be still. Infact, dare I say, I am afraid to be still because being still leaves me vulnerable to my thoughts, and my emotions, my fears. Turns out, the only way for me to be still is to be forced into it by sickness.

-But what if on this Reformation Sunday, a celebration of Martin Luther beginning the Protestant Reformation which would change the church and world forever, instead of only blowing the trumpets, singing loudly “A Mighty Fortress”, and making a lot of noise like we are used to, we are also reminded of silence.

-Most historians would agree that the Reformation, or most notably, Martin Luther challenging the Roman Catholic Church to reform its ways of teaching and understanding the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was a step forward for western humanity. It gave rise to new ideas of equality, justice, education for all (especially women), and care for the poor. All of these things are amazing and wonderful. But here’s the question: do we celebrate the Reformation of the past (something that took place 500 years ago and was completed) or do we celebrate a Reformation that is on-going? Celebrating the Luther’s Reformation of the past is easy: just make a lot of noise. Discerning the Reformation of our time is much harder and in my opinion, requires much more silence than busy-body-action. So what, then, does this on-going Reformation of today silence look like?

-After I recovered from being so sick on Sunday, I did what everyone typically does: I bought a new car. Except, in being such a “deals” driven person, I didn’t end up purchasing the car in Missoula (no that would be too easy). I actually purchased the vehicle in.....Sacramento, California. Yes, you heard me correctly. To save several thousand dollars: I flew out to Sacramento California, bought a Subaru Forester, and drove all 890 miles (19 ½ hours) home by myself. Now before you say: “what on earth does this have to do with this sermon?”, I will tell you. Turns out there is a lot of opportunity for silence when driving. When I got home, Abby asked me: “what podcasts and such did you listen to while you were driving?” None. (in part because I still can’t figure out how to get my stupid phone connected to the radio, but that’s another story). I listened to some radio stations, but a lot of the time I was in silence. I couldn’t believe how much my mind was cleared as my focus became me and the road. At one point, the highway climbed over the Salmon River (in Idaho) where I witnessed this incredible morning sun. I pulled off at the scenic viewpoint and literally found myself bounding out of the car to take it all in. Even though I was still recovering from my illness, had slept in the car and not taken a shower for a while, I was utterly refreshed and whole in that moment. I found myself seeing the divine along the drive in ways I would have just passed by only several days before.

-Silence is reformation. Literally. Maybe this is why we don’t have to look very far in scripture and the gospels to see Jesus taking a lot of silence. If you look for it, I guarantee it will blow you away how many times Jesus “goes up the mountain” or “prays in the garden” to be reformed himself. If Jesus needed it, maybe we do to.

-So, again: what does this on-going Reformation of today silence look like?

-Obviously, silence before God that is beneficial may look a bit different for you than for me. (maybe silence while driving for you is generally not a good thing and that's OK!) But, maybe as a community-in-Christ, we can help and encourage each other in living into silence better. When I was in seminary, I took a transformative class on Buddhism and meditation which explored different forms of silence. The professor there had three things in relation to silence which were helpful for me and which I share with you:

1. Resist the fear of silence. It's true: we are afraid of silence and the vulnerability of being silent. But when we (maybe collectively) resist this temptation to feel awkward with silence, it opens us up to new possibilities.
2. Practice silence as often as you can. Like a hobby or sport, silence needs to be practiced. Even 5 minutes a day in some shape or form can be renewing.
3. Find a Focal Point. When you have something to focus on (like the road or painting on the wall or tree leaves outside the window) your brain has much less room to wander.

-Resist the fear of silence, practice it as often as you can, and find a focal point. All things that I think are attainable, I believe, for reformation in a real way. Maybe on this Reformation Sunday, being reformed in silence doesn't have to mean getting sick. Instead, may our savior come to you in new ways this day and beyond through silence and stillness. To conclude, I would like all of us to practice entering into a period of silence together, being mindful of a new kind of reformation in our midst. (2 minutes)

-May God come to us and reform us through silence. Amen.