



## Wednesday Prayer

### Reformation Sunday – Remarkable Stories of Grace

**For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:22B-24**

**Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” John 8:31-32**

In 2012, I had the privilege of accompanying youth to the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans, and served as a small group discussion leader for our synod. In one discussion, I asked the youth what had surprised them in their experience at the gathering. A young man from another parish began shedding tears, and shared that one of the speakers, Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber, had surprised him with her remarkable story of recovery from addiction, and how the liturgical practice of confession and forgiveness and the Lutheran emphasis on grace played a key role in freeing her from the weight of guilt and shame. This young man told the group about his own struggle with addiction and his resulting feelings of worthlessness, shame and guilt. He wasn't even planning to attend the gathering, but another youth backed out at the last minute and he was unexpectedly offered the opportunity to attend. He said,

*“I have felt so ashamed for so long, I didn't feel like I was worthy to come on this trip. The last thing I expected to see was this lady covered with tattoos talking about her addiction. If she can experience God's forgiveness for all the things she did as an addict, so can I.”*

Being the church happens in so many different ways. We never know what approach is going to result in another person experiencing the gospel so deeply, so we need to keep being the church in many creative ways. Whether through Sunday morning liturgy, or sharing our grace experience as one saint/sinner to another saint/sinner, or offering an unexpected trip to a youth gathering, we need to keep being the church in every aspect of our lives in order to surprise others with the freeing message of God's grace.

Those who are vulnerable to or who have experienced sex-trafficking are often weighed down with the stone of shame and guilt for a variety of reasons. By being the church through prayer, education and advocacy, we can share the surprising, mind-blowing news of redemption and freedom and help to lift that stone from their shoulders. We can join in solidarity with them as a fellow saint/sinner, and join in rejoicing with them that we are all free through God's grace.

**Jesus, you showed us the truth of God's grace and how to be the church in the world. We pray that the joy that surprises us through that good news propels us into being the church and sharing that news in all that we say and do. Amen.**

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