**Topic**: **Faith** Teacher Focus: Faith in Jesus Christ is a good thing for you and for the world!

**Expert**: World (media’s) has redefined faith and values - myths of Christianity (bigoted, doesn’t help the poor, intellectually wanting, etc…) . Also possibly topics like – Religion is a private thing, or all faiths lead to the same God, etc…

**Testimony**: testimony to impact of world’s myths about faith/Christianity

Readings are lectionary texts appointed for Reformation Sunday Series C

**OT Reading**: Psalm 46 and/or Rev. 14:6-7

**NT Reading**:

**Romans 3:19-28** New International Version (NIV)

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+3%3A19-28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28014a)] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+3%3A19-28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28017b)] through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. 28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

**Gospel**: John 8:31-36

Back in the 1500’s some problems existed in the church. The church was led astray by the world. You might say they weren’t being good students in God’s school. The world’s lessons and teachings were influencing the church down the wrong path. So, Martin Luther, was led by God to dig deep into the word of God and really do his homework. The powerful, influential school of God and His Word changed Martin Luther’s entire worldview and perception of God and the world he lived in. That led to the reformation of the church and a return to the fundamentals of Christianity. We call them the solas of the reformation. Three big solas are Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia, and Sola Fide – Sola Scriptura - Scripture alone. Scripture alone is the source of faith and life. Sola Gratia – Grace Alone – salvation is grounded in God’s Grace Alone– and Sola Fide – Faith Alone – salvation comes by faith alone and no other means! Let’s look at that last one.

Sola Fide – Faith Alone – The world we live in today might actually agree with that one. You see, in a recent Gallup survey participants were asked, “Do you believe in God?” 92% of those questioned answered “yes”.

92% of citizens of the United States say they have faith –they believe. I mean even George Michael back in 1987 sang - “you gotta have faith.” – It was the top-selling single of the year. Now I don’t know about you but I wouldn’t describe 92% of the people I come into contact with as those who believe/have faith in God. I think that maybe we’ve got different definitions to the words faith, belief, maybe even God –

**[Expert Testimony Here]**

The world has redefined terms and we need to revisit what just exactly is faith. Sometimes it’s helpful to define faith by first saying what it isn’t – Faith is not a general belief in the existence of God. Romans chapter one talks about how all the world may have that sort of knowledge. Faith is also not merely knowledge about Jesus and the historical facts of the gospels. James 2:19 says that even the demons have that kind of “faith”. Faith is also not a decision we make or something we do.

In the New Testament the Word, **πιστεύω,** is the root behind a lot of the words we have in English that have to do with faith. We talk a lot about believing, trusting, having faith, putting confidence in – all of that is one concept in the New Testament. So, in the New Testament, to have faith, is to believe and to trust. These ideas, however, aren’t just concepts that float out there and stand by themselves; they always have an object – Faith is always in something or someone – you see, Faith is the human act of believing, of trusting, of placing our confidence in and depending on someone or something. This sort of Faith is the very core of our reality. If faith is misplaced than all of life is skewed. If faith is misdirected toward one of God’s creatures, rather than being directed toward the Creator himself, life becomes unstable. Faith is really about relationship. Think of the best relationship you’ve had with someone over you. Maybe it was a parent, grandparent, a mentor, a boss, a teacher, a coach, a professor...a pastor, a youth worker… someone who looked out for you, guided you, built you up, sought the best for you… your relationship with them was one of trust, dependence, confidence… you had faith in them. In many ways that starts to get at what it means to have faith… to believe… in God.

Whatever or whoever we put our faith in, that is where we ultimately find our identity, security and meaning for life. That person or thing becomes our God – Martin Luther in his explanation of the 1st commandment defines what a “god” is. He says “A God is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. To have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe [that is have faith in] him with our whole heart. … That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is really your God.”

I want you to pause a second and think about that statement. What do you really entrust yourself to? To what does your heart cling? Where do you find your sense of identity, security and meaning for this life? For these past weeks we’ve talked a lot about what the world’s teachings are. The world, in many ways, teaches us to put our faith in all the wrong places – in money, in our work, in a distorted view of sexuality, in greatness and fame… and the list goes on –

God’s school says there is only one sure place to put your faith, and that is in God himself, in Jesus Christ! In many ways the World teaches that the object of faith doesn’t really matter just as long as you have faith in something. We call this fideism – faith in faith itself. The problem with this is that if you’re drowning in the middle of the ocean, your life depends on what you cling to, what you have faith in! If you cling to a life preserver that’s good! But if you cling to an anchor? Or to a passing shark? You are going to drown. If you cling to yourself? You are going to drown. If you trust in your strength, your wisdom, your ability to swim 500 miles to shore, you are going to drown. If you put your faith in how you feel about the situation at the moment…I’ll just remain positive, think happy thoughts and all will go well… you are going to drown. The reality is that the object of our Faith matters –Faith must have a reliable object to cling to and the only one that can really save is Jesus – He’s the life preserver.

The world teaches and tempts us to put our faith in all the wrong things – things that will cause us to drown – cause us to die. Things that appear to be true… things that look like they will save us… things that sound true… but all of them are meant to deceive.

To be honest I’ve been deceived by this world too many times. Every time I’ve placed my faith in money and material possession to bring me identity, security and meaning it’s been a disaster and I’ve been let down every time. The world lies that you will find identity, security and meaning by abusing God’s gift of sexuality, but that only brings shame, guilt, and fractured relationships. When I’ve put my faith in my family or my job as a pastor instead of Jesus – I always end up wanting and running mindlessly in circles – fatigued and drained. When I’ve put my faith in my accomplishments and other’s perceptions of me – I’ve been devastated when I fail and arrogant when I succeed!

We all want real security, meaning and a true identity in this life. I’ve found that the more time I spend in God’s school, following his son Jesus, hearing his words spoken into my very being and everyday life. The more He influences me… the more there is a profound peace that reaches deep into me – there’s a safety I find even if life isn’t safe…. There’s a purpose that is awakened in me that cuts through the cacophony of distractions vying for my attention … and there’s a true sense of who I am that is able to withstand the lies of our culture, our world and even my sinful self. All of this is from having faith in Jesus.

**[Personal Testimony Here]**

Martin Luther’s sola fide of the reformation stood against the backdrop of God’s people putting their faith in their own works. The apostle Paul states in Romans 3: 20… “20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.” What does it mean to be righteous? One theologian says that it is to be in the state you ought to be. You might say to exist before God without sin or brokenness in your life. We all look at our lives and we see sin and brokenness. In fact the deep longing of every human is to be as they ought to be… to be the way God intended you to be – perfect, sinless, perfectly free before God and each other… a return to the Garden of Eden – to be righteous! Paul says you can’t be declared righteous… declared as you ought to be… by trusting in your works. He continues in Romans 3… “21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through **faith** **in[**[**h**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%203&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28014h)**] Jesus Christ** to all who **believe**. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” These are some of the richest teachings in God’s school… in many ways the center of the Gospel itself. Paul says this righteousness – this life-as-it-ought-to-be existence – is given through FAITH . And notice it’s not just some generic “you gotta have faith” sort of thing… the faith, the trust, the reliance, the relationship, the confidence is directed in one particular direction…to God himself! To Jesus Christ! Faith in Jesus Christ means we are given righteousness – we are given an existence as we ought to be! Paul continues in Romans 3… “25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,[[i](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%203&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28017i)] through the shedding of his blood—to be received by **faith**. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have **faith** **in Jesus**.” Not just faith in whatever… faith IN Jesus. Paul continues in verse 27…. “27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires **faith**.” Yes you gotta have faith… Faith is required… but it’s in Jesus alone! Paul continues “28 For we maintain that a person is justified by **faith** apart from the works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by **faith** and the uncircumcised through that same **faith**. 31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this **faith**? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”

The apostle Paul uses the word Faith 9 times at the end of Romans 3 and then into Romans 4 he keeps it up mentioning faith 17 times as he talks about Abraham being restored to how he ought to be… by faith in God. Faith is a big deal. And despite what the World says, God and his Word say that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way for you to exist as you ought to be… to live as you were created to be… to really be made right with God and with his creation.

St. Paul points out that this faith in Jesus is for all people. God wants all to return to a state of righteousness – to how they ought to be! He has called us to bring that message of hope to the whole world. There’s a whole sea of people out their… drowning in their sins… drowning in brokenness… drowning in unrighteousness… drowning in an existence that is not as it ought to be… God has called us to action… to throw them the life preserver – to give them Jesus! To save them… to bring them a righteousness that comes from faith in Jesus!

Our world would have you believe that it’s wrong to bring this faith in Jesus to others. The world would like you to think that any faith will do just as long as it is faith in something. The world would have you think… they’re not drowning… it only looks that way… they’ll be ok… they believe in themselves… they have a positive attitude… they can swim that far…don’t impose yourself… let them find their own way…

God says… they are drowning… they’re not going to be okay… their faith is misplaced… they aren’t ok… they can’t swim that far and their attitude won’t save them… you’re a life guard and you’ve got to get in there and help them find the way… the truth, the life…

– who’s drowning in your life… who really needs you to throw them the life preserver?