When going on excursions and different trips there is one question that I believe parents dread to hear. Can you guess what I am thinking of?.... It is are we there yet? Are we there yet is a question that can bother even the most patient of parents or adult travelers because it can easily transform into a rallying cry. It can drive you bonkers. It is an incessant question that occurs over and over again, and people who research the phenomenon of why kids ask are we there yet so often is because when we are young we do not fully grasp the concept of time.

So for us, an hour is easy to comprehend, but an hour to a toddler does not mean as much because they can’t grasp the concept, they have not been on the earth very long. And so now what people do is they work in increments the children can understand. Most kids show are 30 minutes and so they will let the kids play with a toy for 30 minutes and then introduce another. Or let them watch a show and tell them how many shows they have left until they get somewhere. So instead of 2 hours, they say. In about 4 paw patrol episodes we will be there and plan accordingly. They adjust to language the children understand, and they give them something to do in that time frame.

Are we there yet? It’s a question that Gods people have been asking for millennia and it has looked like this, are we where God wants us to be? Are we doing what God has called us to do? Are we living into who God has called us to be? Are we loving who God has called us to love? Are we worshipping you as we ought to do? And so much more. Are we there yet and its various forms is a question of reflection and examination? It’s a question of reflection and self-examination that is born out of a desire to serve God faithfully, a desire to be the best vessel we can be, a desire to love.

Let me share with you two stories of two people millennia apart, who had a passion to serve God and to do it faithfully.

The first starts out in 2 Kings 22-23 and in 2 Chronicles 34-35. The author of Kings describes the accession of Josiah to the throne at 8 years after the assassination of his father King Amon and he reigned for 31 years. According to the Hebrew Bible, in the eighteenth year of his rule, Josiah ordered the High Priest Hilkiah to use the tax money which had been collected over the years to renovate the temple. It was during this time that Hilkiah discovered the Book of the Law. While Hilkiah was clearing the treasure room of the Temple he discovered a scroll described as "the book of the Law" or as "the book of the law of Yahweh by the hand of Moses".[13] The phrase "the book of the Torah" (ספר התורה, sefer ha-torah) in 2 Kings 22:8 is identical to the phrase used in Joshua 1:8 and 8:34 to describe the sacred writings that Joshua had received from Moses.

Hilkiah brought the scroll to Josiahs attention. An assembly of the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and of all the people was called, and Josiah then encouraged the exclusive worship of Yahweh, forbidding all other forms of worship. The instruments and emblems of the worship of Baal and "the host of heaven" were removed from the Jerusalem Temple. Local sanctuaries, or High Places, were destroyed, from Beer-sheba in the south to Beth-el and the cities of Samaria in the north.[6] Josiah had pagan priests executed and even had the bones of the dead priests of Bethel exhumed from their graves and burned on their altars. Josiah also reinstituted the Passover celebrations.

They found the book and examined their worship and found that they were no longer worshipping the Lord as Gods people should and instituted a reform to get them back on track.

Fast forward almost two thousand years and we get to Martin Luther. A monk who was dedicated to serving God. So dedicated that he would spend hours at the foot of the altar confessing his sins. He studied scripture and came across the book of Romans where he discovered the teachings of Paul and fell in love. He especially loved Romans chapter three 21-26 which as we heard states “But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ[d] for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement[e] by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Hilkiah discovers the law of Moses and two thousand years later Martin Luther discovers Paul. And they both looked at the worship and teaching about God and realized reform was needed. Josiahs time needed renewed worship, and the church in Luthers time needed renewed teaching. Salvation by grace through faith alone needed to be taught again, and they needed to rely on scripture alone and not the teachings of the Pope or others in authority. The laity needed to be empowered which meant teaching the men and the women and children to read so that they could read the Bible for themselves. And the church, a place for the needy to find sanctuary became an institution that took advantage of the poor by the way of indulgences.

Luther eventually takes his ideas to the church leaders and they don’t listen so he posts his 95 theses and the rest is history. These two movements birthed out of a desire to serve God and worship God the way we were intended too.

Time and time again, self-reflection and examination of the church has led us to more faithfully serve God, worship God, and talk about God. And we celebrate the Reformation and remember that we are a church that was birthed out of self-reflection and examination that is full of broken, imperfect, beautiful people, we must carry on the tradition of Luther and Josiah, and so many church mothers and fathers as the church universal, individual church bodies, and those that make up the body of Christ ask God, are we there yet? Because we are fallible beings who can easily stray from who God has called us to be and do our own thing.

It is something that we do because we want to be who God has called us to be. We want to be the vessels God has called us to be. We want to worship God the way he ought to be worshipped. We want to serve God the way God ought to be served. We want to praise God the way God ought to be praised. We want to be faithful to the God who sent his son to die for us, the God who forgives us our sin, the God who loves us.

So as I close this sermon, I want to give us time to honor Luther and other church reformers by giving you time to just self-reflect and examine and ask God are we there yet for you as an individual and for us as a church.