

Jesus, The Lord of All

Texts: Genesis 37:1-5,12-28

Romans 10:5-15 (Series A, 11th Sunday after Pentecost) Ps.105,1-6, 16-22, 45b

Matthew 14:22-33

Prayer:

During a sermon, a pastor announced: "If you know your wife is controlling you, move to the left." All the men in the church moved to the left except one man. The pastor was happy there was at least one strong man, and asked him: "How come your wife can't control you?" The man quietly replied, "It's my wife who told me not to move."

What is the general view in the world today about how a person can get to heaven? If you were to ask people living in this neighborhood, colleagues at work, friends from college, strangers on the street or even sometimes people in the church, they'll usually say "*Do good to others*, always do what you feel is right, work really hard at being a better person, try to improve every time and you will have a good chance of making it into heaven".

Logically this probably makes sense because in every other field if you put in hard work and a lot of dedication you can achieve your goals. You will get recognized and rewarded for your best efforts in any field. Plus, the thought is that if you are a good person, God you can easily gain access into heaven.

We will take a moment look at how this passage today responds to that general view. What we'll find out is that this is not just an intellectual response but this is something that can radically transform our life.

Romans 10:5-15

Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: "The person who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (*that is, to bring Christ up from the dead*).

But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?

As it is written: “*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*”

Right from the start we see two ways being described: there is *one* “*righteousness by the law*” and there is “*righteousness by faith*”. Just to define righteousness: it is the way in which a way a person can be accepted by God! To rephrase: there are two ways here:

- A way by which a person can be accepted by God through the law
- A way by which a person can be accepted by God through faith

Let’s look at each in detail.

Righteousness through the Law:

“The person who does these things will live by them.” This is same general worldview that we spoke about earlier: *Do good, do better, improve yourself and God will accept you*. On the outset it seems logical and innocent. However, there are **two problems** with this view:

1. Isaiah the prophet says our righteousness is like a felty rags. The reality is that the holiness of God is way beyond our understanding or imagination. As

sinful people, we could never comprehend how holy is our God! That's why the Bible rightly differentiates between God and Sin...Light and Darkness!

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2. The prophet Jeremiah pointed it out that: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jer 17:9)* What? Wait a minute? My heart? We know that that's the place from where all our emotions and decisions come from.

If that's wicked and sick, how can we ever think that we just need to make a few corrections and adjustments? It's like rotten vegetables, no matter how much you wash them or boil them...they are still going to be bad and taste bad.

Further more you may ask, why have a law? To define what "law" is. The, law is the set of commandments that God gave Moses to communicate with the people. It's the terms by which God and humanity could relate with each other.

What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.

The law was given so that we could know what "sin" is. If any country or nation like Canada doesn't have a law that governs the land, what happens? Utter chaos and lawlessness. So, God gave us the law so that we could know what His standards were and relate with Him accordingly. (Road signs)

So, the example given here is of the command "*Do not covet*". The purpose was to let us know what God's Holy standards were. But what did the sin in our hearts do? Why do you think we always want to do what we're forbidden to do?

It's easier to do what is wrong than to do what is right. Just imagine there is a kleptomaniac (*someone who is unable to refrain from stealing things*) in a town where they don't have a proper law and order.

If we take that kleptomaniac, bring him to a town where there is a proper law and give him training on the "*Do's*" and "*Don't's*", do you think he'll stop stealing?

No. Because the issue is within him, not in his environment. Now that's us! So, what do you think? Can we be accepted by God through the Law, Good works, Best efforts? No.



This brings us to the Righteousness by Faith alone

But the righteousness that is by faith says: *“Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).*

You and I don't need to go and reach the highest heaven in order to find God or be accepted by God. When I think about this, I think about all the actors, musicians and businessmen and individuals who travel from the West to India trying to find God. God has already sent His Only Son to us! Neither do you need to go down to the grave to find Jesus.

He died and rose again on the third Day! He is our living Saviour. *“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

By believing in your heart that Christ died for you and rose again on the third Day and declaring that “Christ is your Lord”, you will be saved! How can Christ be your Lord? Remember it's not just giving lip service to Jesus but committing your whole life. And it's because Christ committed Himself to dying on the cross for you!

Christ Jesus was the only person who lived a life acceptable to God. No man on earth apart from Jesus lived like that. It was a perfect life and then He gave it up on the cross to die for our selfishness, lust, apathy, pride, self-righteousness, hatred, bitterness, disobedience and the like.

He died and rose again so that He could offer us His perfect life that would make us acceptable to God. So beautiful! We receive Christ's righteousness just by believing and making him our Lord. This is the righteousness by faith.

Does it take years to be made right before God? Does it take a certain level of maturity? Do you need to be 70-80% perfect to be saved? No. Instantly and freely you and I can receive this gift by believing and making Christ your Lord!

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Contrary to every other worldview or religious belief system in the world? Where everything around us tells us we can do better and we may have a chance, Christ says "I've already done the work...perfect, finished work on the cross! Take it freely! It's for you!"

As Scripture says, "*Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.*" Here is the juicy part! For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." And he sealed the deal, this promise with His own blood.

Simply ... there is no difference between any of us. There is no distinction based on what your upbringing or religious background or sin history is. You may be a rapist or serial killer or atheist or whatever but Christ is your Lord and He will richly bless you if you call on Him.

That sometimes seems too good to be true and it is! That's why it is good news! "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Through Jesus everyone will be saved! By the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, everyone will be accepted by God.

Finally, we have come to the mission part: Our responsibility as Christians How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: *“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* We just read and pondered on how wonderful this news is!

Firstly, no one can be made right before God by obeying the Law. Secondly and most importantly, everyone can be made right with God by faith in Jesus. What Paul is saying here...this is such an amazing truth! How will people call, depend and trust Jesus if they don't believe? How will they believe if they don't hear the good news?

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How will they hear if no one preaches to them? And how can people preach unless they are sent? *Sending, preaching, hearing, believing* and *calling upon* the Lord...that's the pattern set before us in Scripture this morning. This truth of the gospel should excite us and get us charged to take the gospel to everywhere we go.

I do remind you almost every Sunday that our mission for others begins outside of these walls. This mission is an outflow of the gospel's work and activity in our lives! Only the church knows and understands the difference between righteousness by the Law and righteousness by faith alone. The world by default thinks only about righteousness by Law.

But we know the joy of being accepted, owned, comforted, satisfied, loved by God through faith in Jesus Christ. It's needs to be told. It needs to be shared. Believing is preceded by hearing the good news. **Amen.**

August 13, 2023

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