

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 9, 2020

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *Praise the Almighty* Setting: Robert Lind

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #797 Praise the Almighty

- 1 **Praise the Almighty, my soul, adore Him!**
Yes, I will laud Him until death;
With songs and anthems I come before Him
As long as He allows me breath.
From Him my life and all things came;
Bless, O my soul, His holy name.
Alleluia, alleluia!
- 2 **Trust not in rulers; they are but mortal;**
Earthborn they are and soon decay.
Vain are their counsels at life's last portal,
When the dark grave engulfs its prey.
Since mortals can no help afford,
Place all your trust in Christ, our Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia!
- 3 **Blessèd, oh, blessèd are they forever**
Whose help is from the Lord Most High,
Whom from salvation can nothing sever,
And who in hope to Christ draw nigh.
To all who trust in Him, our Lord
Will aid and counsel now afford.
Alleluia, alleluia!
- 4 **Penitent sinners, for mercy crying,**
Pardon and peace from Him obtain;
Ever the wants of the poor supplying,
Their faithful God He will remain.
He helps His children in distress,
The widows and the fatherless.
Alleluia, alleluia!

△ 5 **Praise, all you people, the name so holy
Of Him who does such wondrous things!
All that has being, to praise Him solely,
With happy heart its amen sings.
Children of God, with angel host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
Alleluia, alleluia!**

CONFESSIO AND ABSOLUTION

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.
(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

Gracious God,
have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen.

KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the gift of divine peace and of pardon, with all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

For the holy Christian church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith, let us pray to the Lord:
Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord.
Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

HYMN OF PRAISE

**To you on high be glory and peace to all the earth;
Goodwill from God in heaven proclaimed at Jesus' birth!
We praise and bless You, Father; Your holy name, we sing –
Our thanks for Your great glory, Lord God our heavenly King.**

**To you, O sole begotten, the Father's Son, we pray;
O Lamb of God, our Savior, You take our sins away.
Have mercy on us, Jesus; receive our heartfelt cry,
Where You in power are seated at God's right hand on high.**

**For You alone are holy; You only are the Lord.
Forever and forever, be worshiped and adored;
You with the Holy Spirit alone are Lord Most High,
In God the Father's glory. "Amen!" our glad reply.**

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty and most merciful God,
**preserve us from all harm and danger that we, being ready in both body and soul, may cheerfully
accomplish what You want done; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns
with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**



FIRST LESSON Job 38:1–11

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?
Dress for action like a man;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.
“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone,
when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
“Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb,
when I made clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
and prescribed limits for it
and set bars and doors,
and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stayed?’”

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 18:1-6

I love you, O LORD, my strength.

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me;
the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help.

From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately [Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

ALLELUIA VERSE

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

SERMON TEXT Romans 10:1-17

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on 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 abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ:

In our examination of the Book of Romans this summer we’ve now gotten to the tenth chapter. In this chapter, Paul continues to address the fact that many of his fellow Jews do not believe Jesus is God’s promised Messiah. For Paul, Jesus is clearly the one God has sent in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the one who has come to make God’s salvation known in a new way, bringing Jew and Gentile together in a great movement of faith. The fact that this is not believed by all is a source of great sadness for Paul.

Part 1 - A reminder of God’s righteousness

As Paul explains how this sad fact could happen, we hear him, in today’s verses, remind his hearers of the misunderstanding that has taken place regarding God’s righteousness. Paul has already spoken about God’s righteousness in earlier chapters – especially chapters three and four. Now he mentions it again as it pertains to the question at hand.

Paul begins by pointing out that it is not enough to be zealous about the things of God. Zeal does no good if you are zealous about the wrong things. Knowledge is needed also.

To be righteous before God one must know what God has done for us. Specifically, one must know what he has done for us through the Messiah – his son, Jesus Christ. One must then submit to this knowledge and give up the quest to make themselves righteous through zealous efforts in following the law.

Paul knows this is a hard thing for people to understand, for the law that God has given is good. In fact, the “law” – as that word is primarily used in the Old Testament – was shorthand for all God had said to his people. The law is to be treasured above all things, and the law is life-giving. Paul quotes Moses,

from the book of Leviticus, who says that “the person who does the commandments shall live by them.” Contained in this verse is a very clear promise of life.

And yet, notice that this verse is specifically talking about God’s commands – the part of the law that contained his rules for living. And notice, too, that the verse is worded in a way which reminds the hearer that one is to truly live the commands. The person who “does the commandments shall live by them.” The commandments will give life as a person lives them.

The scriptures are filled with commands of God that do indeed help people achieve better life. They show how we can live life together equitably and justly. They teach us what it means to truly love one another. They teach us a proper posture before God.

But the scriptures also clearly show, through their record of human history, how people continually fail to live according to God’s commands. People do their own thing instead of God’s will. People sin.

Thankfully, God also gives a righteousness that comes through faith. This is a righteousness which is given to us as a knowledge – something to be known, something to be trusted.

It is a righteousness that comes through repentance. It is a righteousness that was earned for us, by another.

Paul speaks here of two kinds of righteousness. He labels one a “righteousness based on the law.” The other he calls a “righteousness that is based on faith.”

Martin Luther often distinguished between these two kinds of righteousness too. The righteousness based on the law he would call an “active righteousness” or our “righteousness before the world.” Luther encourages us in this righteousness, because there is great blessing in living rightly, and because our neighbor needs our good works.

However, this righteousness does not save us from our sin. And this righteousness is not the sum or even the high point of God’s message to us.

There is a greater righteousness – the one that is based on faith. This one is passive, meaning it was given to us and not based on our actions. This one is our righteousness before God – our identity – given to us by Christ, earned for us on the cross.

According to Paul, many people only hear God’s call to give better effort or have more zeal. These people are often rewarded in this thinking by the good feelings they receive through their effort and the applause they receive from others.

But no can give an effort that is truly good in all respects. Our efforts will always be tainted by our sin. As such, our efforts cannot lead us to God. And sometimes our efforts and zeal will actually lead us away from God, and away from others.

Rather than focusing on what we do, we need to know what God has done for us. We need to be grounded through the knowledge he has given us. We need to know that our failure has been overcome by God. We need the righteousness based on faith.

Part 2 – The call to confess and believe

As Paul describes this righteousness to us, he draws on the language of a well-known passage from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30:11-12) to show that the righteousness does not come from our efforts. We do not bring Christ down to our world, nor do we bring Christ up from the dead. We cannot do these things. Rather, we have our righteousness through a word: a word from God... a word that is in us... a word that is in our mouths and in our hearts.

At this point, Paul is ready to say more about how we *acknowledge* the righteousness that is based on faith. Using that passage from Deuteronomy and its reference to mouths and hearts, Paul calls us to confess and believe. “Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

And here we should pause and think about how we can best do these things. The church teaches us to confess our faith regularly when it leads us to say the Creed in the worship service. In fact, the phrase used here by Paul – “Jesus is Lord” – may well be a very early credal statement. Saying the Creed is an important time of confession for all of us. I pray that you take it seriously and see it for the blessing that it is.

That being said, the more important confession we make is the one we give outside the church. This confession is made when we wear the label of “Christian” and not shrink from it when questioned. This confession is made when we explain to another that we go to church, or read from the Bible, or pray, or give a portion of our income to support the work of the church.

Our confession of faith is vitally important. And yet, not more important than our belief. Paul commends the faith to both our mouths and our hearts. He does this because he knows people can say one thing with their mouth but believe another.

That is not to be us. Our Christian confession is not something said as an attempt to engender trust from others nor be a stance in a culture war – as it seems to be for some. Rather, our confession is to reflect what we truly believe, no matter how hard that belief might be at times.

Paul also makes clear that such belief and confession transcend one’s ethnic and national identities. What’s important to God is not whether one is born a Jew or a Greek – to use the common distinction that was made in Paul’s day. Rather, what’s important is what one confesses and believes. And this is what should be important to us as well.

Part 3 – The call to preach the word

As Paul makes this claim, he once again grounds his statement in scripture. Quoting the prophet Joel, he says: “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Such a statement would make a fitting conclusion to this chapter. And yet, the words of the prophet spark one more thought for Paul: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?”

To call upon the Lord’s name is an act of faith, and faith is created only by the word of God. People do not hatch out faith by thinking hard about their need for it; they only come to faith when they hear the Lord’s voice.

This thought of Paul's then leads him to ask about preaching. "And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" he writes. Which leads him to more scripture – this time from Isaiah (52:7). As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Regarding this passage, you would think that maybe it would be the preacher's lips or face that would be called beautiful – after all, that's the part that's speaking. The church makes sure that its preachers are beautifully clothed but doesn't say much about their shoes. I've always thought that maybe the preacher's feet are beautiful because they are going to new places and new people. Or at least they should be. Preaching may be about the word of God, but it is also about getting the word out.

And while Paul is quoting the late chapters of Isaiah, he decides to add a word from chapter 53 as well, this time saying: "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" The word of God may go out, but it will not always be believed. And note here that Paul uses the word obeyed. "They have not all obeyed the gospel," he says. This is not a reference to any kind of work on our part, but simply a synonym of belief – as it was in chapter six (v. 17) where Paul speaks of those who have "become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching."

Paul concludes this chapter with four more quotations of scripture. He definitely wants his hearers to catch his commitment to God's word. Our portion of the text ends with a great summary statement: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

God has done a new thing in sending Christ Jesus. Paul has been telling the Romans, and us, all about it.

The question for us is: do we hear? Are we truly listening? Or are we thinking to ourselves: "yeah, yeah... more words... the world is filled with them."

We live in the information age. We can find detailed write-ups about any topic we'd like with the touch of a finger. As such, we're more apt these days than even the Romans and Jews to be drawn to zeal and works as preferable to mere words.

But God has spoken to us through words – the words of the prophets, the words of the evangelists, and the word made flesh – his Son, Jesus Christ. We are to hear these words. And believe.

And in those times when we feel we must look at an action as well... let us look not to the deeds of men, but only to the cross of Christ, where we see the righteousness of God, given to us.

In the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #849 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

- 1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness
With a liberating light;
Praise the One who frees the pris'ners,
Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the Gospel,
Healing ev'ry dread disease,
Calming storms, and feeding thousands
With the very Bread of peace.**

- 2 Praise the One who blessed the children
With a strong, yet gentle, word;
Praise the One who drove out demons
With the piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water
To the desert's burning sand;
From this Well comes living water,
Quenching thirst in ev'ry land.
- 3 Let us praise the Word Incarnate,
Christ, who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose victorious
That we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
Seeing what our God has done;
Let us praise the true Redeemer,
Praise the One who makes us one.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERING Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness Setting: Kristina Langlois

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

O Lord, our God, we do not presume to know Your ways or inform Your judgment. We ask You therefore to grant us Your Holy Spirit, that we may trust you with full faith and grow in the wisdom to which you lead us through the knowledge of your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our God, we have no righteousness of our own but only the righteousness of Christ into which we were clothed in Baptism. Grant us grace, that we may be faithful in every circumstance and bold in the confession of His saving name. Guard those who preach Your Word to us so that, hearing, we may believe and, believing, we may have everlasting life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our God, we ask You to bless our nation and those who lead us. Guide all elected and appointed civil servants in their judgments, that we may know justice in our land and peace among the nations. Make us especially mindful of those who need our special protection, including the unborn, the aged and the oppressed. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our God, we pray for Your blessing upon the schools that teach our children. Lead them into good decisions, provide them with the resources they need, and let there be peace and understanding during this difficult time. We pray especially for the schools, universities and seminaries of our church, that they would be ably supported, well-led, kept safe and remain steadfast in their mission of teaching your holy word. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our God, we remember the sick, those who suffer, those troubled in mind, the grieving and the dying. Deliver them according to Your will and grant them the comfort of Your Word in their afflictions, that they may depend upon Your mercy in every circumstance. Hear us especially for _____.
Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our God, we give thanks for the saints of old who trusted in You in this life and now rest in Christ from all their labors. Keep us in this same faith, that amid the stormy seas of this mortal life we may be safely delivered onto the eternal shores of heaven and join them in the marriage supper of the Lamb in Your kingdom without end. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our God, we pray You to be our light in darkness, our strength in weakness, our courage in fear and our peace in distress. Speak to us by the voice of Your Word, that we may call upon You in the day of trouble and confess Your saving name before all people. Hear us on behalf of ourselves and those for whom we have prayed; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord make His face shine on us
and be gracious to us.
The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

- 1 All you works of God, bless the Lord!
All you angels, now bless the Lord;
Come, you heavens and pow'rs that be,
Praise the Lord and His majesty: *Refrain*

Refrain

Raise your voices high, praise and magnify,
All you works of God, bless the Lord!
Raise your voices high, praise and magnify,
All you works of God, bless the Lord!

- 2 Sing, you sun and you moon above,
Stars of heaven, now sing His love;
Dew and showers, you winds that blow,
Heat and fire, you ice and snow: *Refrain*
- 3 Frost of winter with song so cold,
Dews of summer, your song unfold;
Light and darkness, you day and night,
Clouds of thunder, you lightnings bright: *Refrain*
- 4 Hills and mountains, now sing His worth,
All you green things that grow on earth;
Seas and rivers, you springs and wells,
Beasts and cattle, you birds and whales: *Refrain*
- 5 Come, humanity, sing along,
Sing, you people of God, a song;
Priests and servants, your Lord now bless,
Join, you spirits and souls at rest: *Refrain*
- △ 6 Bless the Lord, all you pure of heart;
All you humble, His praise impart;
God the Father and Son adore,
Bless the Spirit forevermore! *Refrain*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE *All you Works of God, Bless the Lord* Setting: Timothy Shaw

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