

WELCOME 17th July 2022 – 6 Pentecost '22 C

Romans 10:1-17

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Can't tell you how much I'm enjoying going through the book of Romans as a family of disciples... *Bible Study Qs are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.*

As we move into this week... Keep Out - Private Property – Members Only - No Trespassing! We understand & @ times live w/ limited access. Often we're the ones not included. We know what it means to be on the **outside** looking in.

As Paul writes to the Roman church, he says that's not the way of the gospel. As a result of Jesus' death & resurrection all creation is to be gathered to the Father: **For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God. When God, in Christ, reconciles the world to himself...none are to be excluded. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."**

But a big obstacle to that gathering in - harvest...me...us. **But** how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go & tell them without being sent? When we are obedient to our being sent by Christ into the world as bearers/proclaimers of the gospel, those who have never heard hear. Those who hear can believe; & those who believe can call on Jesus trusting in his cross-borne mercy for salvation.

In being claimed by Jesus Christ...dying/rising w/ him by baptism into his life death resurrection & rule we are issued a gospel **call**...his authority & his commission to announce his victorious invitation to all... **That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"**

We'll explore & experience that together...Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious Father, we pray for peace & a receptive settled spirit today. We pray for the riches of your kingdom to overflow in us—the fruit of the Spirit—so that our lives reflect the high calling of being your sons & daughters. Free us from prisons of insecurity, selfishness, fear or foolishness. Deliver us from bondage to callous or sluggish faith. Send your Spirit to infuse mercy vitality & strength into our souls. Establish, strengthen & embolden us in your grace & righteousness, so that what overflows from our lives will be an inspiration & invitation to others. Heal us, our families & our nation Lord, so that we might serve you faithfully & obediently. We ask all these things in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Let's hear God's word

FAITH CHAT:

1. What's one place you experienced in a tangible way the presence of Christ in your life this week (month)? *Did it make a difference? How?*
2. Think of someone you know who does not yet trust the good news of Christ in their lives. Is their unfaith something you pray about? Is it a burden on your heart?
3. What seems to separate them from trusting in Christ?

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON

Let's close in prayer

Heavenly Father,

By the work of your Spirit keep the word of Christ always on my lips & in my heart. Embolden me to make known to everyone in every place that Jesus is Lord & that you have raised him from the dead. Remind me that I have no cause to be ashamed of my faith in him as Lord & Saviour.

Grant not only that I myself should believe but that I should also become partners with you in joining others who to proclaim the Good News to the world.

Thank you that Christ is preached & lived among us & for the deepening of our faith & widening of our witness. Thank you for the salvation that comes from you alone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

6 PENTECOST '22 C – OPERATION GOSPEL: GOSPEL CALL

Maybe you saw the numbers...43.9% & 38.9%...I did & was depressed for ≈ 2 mins. You know what those are...right? That's the number of Australians who self-identity as Xn on the 2021 census **AND** the number who marked "no religion/no faith." My 2 minute depression came on because I know in 2016 those numbers were 52.1% & 30.1%...It's clear; **FEWER** Australians identify as Xn now & **MORE** call themselves "nones" than ever before. Why was I depressed? Because those aren't really #s: They're people...friends...family...neighbours...people I care about. Maybe your kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews...in-laws or possible in-laws...on your sports team, golf 4-some, colleague at work, in your class at school.

Those aren't #s. They're people...people like the Jews about whom Paul would cry **out**: "...the longing of my heart & my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved." Whatever else you get from Rom 10...I hope you take home Paul's burden & his praying passion for those you love who are at this moment at a distance from abundant life in Christ...who right now live according to the whims & demands of a different lord...whose names are right now echoing in your heart because they somehow live as one of those "nones"...at a distance from abundant life in Christ.

Why was I depressed for such a short period of time...2 mins isn't very long? Why didn't I cry out in prayer for days on end...weep & tear my clothes...sackcloth & ashes? **Why?** Because I **KNOW** God **HAS ALREADY** provided **EVERYTHING NECESSARY** so that every one of those people (not #s - people) can hear & experience for themselves the saving good news of Jesus' death/rez/rule for their lives. You know what it is...you/me/us: Christ's body, the church under the power of the Spirit & the mandate of heaven – bearing the authority of Christ & the call/commission of the gospel into our small corners of the world...everything necessary so that every one of those people can hear & experience for themselves the saving good news of Jesus' death/rez/rule for their lives is right here in this room...Paul assures us that is true.

Start right there: "...the longing of my heart & my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved." We all know & care about someone who right now lives according to the whims/demands of a different lord...live chasing some other 'god' that compels them controls them...causes them to chase dreams & goals - hopes & aspirations - to live from values & a worldview that will not completely satisfy or fulfil the deepest longings of their hearts & will daily remind them how far away they are from that satisfaction. They will drink from wells that do not quench their thirst & eat from banquets that leave them hungry. There will always be "more" calling, demanding, insisting you have not made it...you are not enough...still a mess...failure...

For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God. Every accusation we face is wiped clear in Jesus Christ. The law (in whatever form we live it) can only show us our failures & fractures...how far from perfect/complete/whole we are. But the crucified/risen Jesus no longer counts sin against us. He declares us right whole blameless & holy ^{b/4} the Father. **You** were dead because of your sins & because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He cancelled the record of the charges against us & took it away by nailing it to the cross. – Col 2:13-14

Over/over again we can be swept up into that assurance: The Father has *in Christ* reconciled all creation to himself. 1 day he will bring all things to completion...to a fullness unsurpassed...a joy unparalleled...peace w/o end & an intimacy w/ him that is the essence of love, compassion, healing, restoration & joy beyond anything this world can offer. In spite of what we suffer now his glory will obliterate even the memory of our pain. And in being swept up we are unavoidably swept out to those for whom our hearts ache. When we announce the good news of reconciliation to the Father through the work of Christ; others live forever & we thrive.

I remember reading some years back the work of Ian Robinson a Lecturer in Mission Evangelism & Leadership @ United Theological College & Charles Sturt University: **The** strongest influence in overall congregational vitality is, by a clear margin, faith-sharing...the gentle art of faith-filled conversation is the single most change-making task a church can undertake." Not whizbang tech worship. Not a new kids' program or a massive on-line mega-spend or a social justice push against the latest cause of the day...Faith. Filled. Conversation...honestly sharing from the heart what God has done for you in Jesus Christ in a way that invites someone else to trust the good news of death's defeat, hell's overthrow, & sin's forgiveness...a time when Jesus made a difference in your life followed up with something like...I don't know about you, but most days I live from his strength because mine's gone? If I told you how that could be you too, would that be ok? Faith. Filled. Conversation.

For Christ's love **compels** us. Since we believe that **Christ died for all**, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. **He died for everyone** so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died & was raised for them. – 2 Cor 5:14-15 If you get swept up into the power of the gospel, you'll get swept out into the world. Paul reminds us there is no "restricted access, keep out" sign on the good news...for all for everyone...in fact it's as near as your next breath...**The** message is very close at hand; it is on your lips & in your heart." That message is the very message about faith we preach: If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord & believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

We often hear this as the “sinner’s prayer of salvation;” “pray this prayer & you’re in,” @ a revival or a youth rally. But the real sense of the language Paul uses is “If you bet your life on Christ’s resurrection & in the midst of a hostile world declare that new reality...your salvation shines like the light of 1000 suns!”...your life becomes a force that draws people to Christ...*you* are made new & the world around you is transformed every time you open your mouth or bless by your actions. The opposite is also true: If you hedge your bets, cling to multiple “saviours/satisfactions” never mention Jesus as the hope ^{w/}in you...& the **only source** of hope for our world then nothing ever changes...for you or anyone else...ruts remain & stuckness sticks.

It’s funny I was reading an article by a guy I don’t usually credit. He has wonky ideas about God & he is not Xn...but he’s popular & he was critiquing the church. So he had my attention. What he said was right...His big point was that the Xn Church now often answers to a “higher” authority than God & His Word...whether it’s the culture or political winds or being “relevant”...but we veer off into obscurity in the moral swamp of the 21st century worldviews. We give up our unique universal claim & wonder why no one wants to be part of the faith-in-Christ community any more.

The other thing he said...& it ticked me off because he was right...Our expectations of one another are too low. Paul repeatedly called the 1st cent church to a life “worthy of our call” to live to the highest possible measure of Christlikeness over against the standard values/appearances of the world (Eph 4:1, Php 1:27, Col 1:10, 1 Th 2:12, 2 Th 1:11) Being a disciple of Jesus calls for so much more than simple adherence to certain Biblical principles & showing up now & then. As Xns, our lives are 24/7/365 living witnesses to the gospel & people are watching. In the West, the church has increasingly fallen into the trap of providing religious goods & services like a glorified fast-food joint, instead of calling for deep costly participation in the life of a holy community of believers...a community designed to provoke Xns to love & good works & demonstrate a difference the world around us can see & stand in awe of.

You & I have the unique privilege of inviting the world around us – people we know into a joy this world cannot produce – a satisfaction nothing of this earth can supply – healing nothing else in the universe can offer. Which is why Paul asks the church in Rome & us: **But** *how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go & tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!” “As the Father sent me I send you.” “Go therefore & make disciples of all nations...”* Yeah...we’re sent alright...but note too Paul is quoting Is 52...but he leaves my favourite part of that verse out...the best part!

The NT repeatedly tells us Jesus fulfils God’s promises made by the prophets... particularly Isaiah...Isaiah spoke to God’s people surrounding their captivity in Assyria & Babylon & their eventual freedom under Persian rule...In the middle of that sad history; in the middle of their rebellion & unfaith – while they turned everywhere but to God for security/strength/hope God through Isaiah makes this promise: **“But I will reveal my name to my people, & they will come to know its power. Then at last they will recognize that I am the one who speaks to them. ‘How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace & salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!’”** - Is. 52:6-7 See the bit Paul left out?

Imagine...as a defeated/captive/downcast/broken people being reminded that not only does God still love you (in spite of your rebellion & the self-destruction you’ve endured) but that in the end God reigns. God will have the last word. God will reveal to you & in you his power & glory & restore you to your place as his people overthrowing all the earthly powers that would bind you trap you ensnare you & kill you...He would give you life in its fullest out of the grave into which you have run headlong. He will again break the yoke of slavery so you can live with your heads held high. The good news that God is, was & will be forever God...even if no one sees it, acknowledges, or submits to his rule until it is too late...God is still God & will have the final say on all of human history. And his plan is for grace & restoration & life & love & joy...

The NT witness is clear...Jesus says God sent him not to swoop you up out of this broken heap of human history pop wings on your back & put a harp in your hand, but to bring you & all human history & all creation back to its fitting, rightful intended destiny. To bring you back into right relationship ^{w/} the Father who loves you & wants to reveal himself to you & through you...*to live with you & walk with you*...& that time of restoration & renewal & rebuilding is now...by the work of Jesus Christ.

Jesus declares that in him God takes hold of you...makes you his own...first a recipient & then an agent of that good news...When we are obedient to our being sent by Christ into the world as bearers/proclaimers of the gospel, those who have never heard hear. Those who hear can believe; & those who believe can call on Jesus trusting in his cross-borne mercy for salvation. In being claimed by Jesus Christ...dying/rising ^{w/} him by baptism into his life death resurrection & rule we are issued a gospel call...granted his authority & empowered by his commission to announce his victorious invitation to all...

TAKE IT HOME –

That person you thought of at the start...How will you renew your efforts to share the good news of the Gospel with them? What’s 1 thing you’ll do this week?