

"Everyone"

August 10, 2008

Romans 10:5-15

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Romans 10:5-15

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that comes from 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, on your lips and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame."

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Prayer.

Our passage from Romans this morning

Serves as

Good news to some,

A scandal to others,

And a challenge to all.

This is the Good news:

"Everyone

who calls on the name of the Lord

shall be saved."

Everyone is all-inclusive.

It allows us to create

The logical statement

"If one calls on the name of the Lord
then they shall be saved."

It certainly doesn't give the appearance
That God has established strict criteria
Or admission requirements
For salvation.

The composition of those saved
Appears to be of little or no interest to
God.

"Red and yellow, black and white,
they are precious in his sight,"
the old Sunday school song goes,
"Jesus loves the little children of the
world."

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The apostle uses the classical division:
"There is no distinction between Jew and Greek;
the same Lord is Lord of all
and is generous to all who call on him."
But it is the modifier to this sentence
Where we should place our attention:
It's the same Lord and generous to all.
This is what I mean:
Jew or Greek? It's the same Lord.
Young or Old? It's the same Lord.
Fat or thin? It's the same Lord.
Tall or short? It's the same Lord.
Male or Female? It's the same Lord.
Scientist or Ditch Digger? It's the same Lord.
Rich or Poor? It's the same Lord.
Olympic Athlete or the Intellectually Disabled? It's the same Lord.
You fill in the next two blanks:
_____ or _____? It's the same Lord.
Finally, let me have the final two:
You or me? It's the same Lord.

I don't know about you
But I know that I've had doubts all my life.
Nothing makes me doubt more
Than the cavalier attitude and hypocrisy of organized religion.
I've read, I've debated the classic atheists and antagonists of faith:
religion is the crutch of the people,
a psychological delusion,
or an evolutionary defect.
Yes, I have doubts,
But the doubts have never overwhelmed me.
What gives me hope
Comes from right here in Romans:
Even though I have doubts
I will always confess that Jesus is Lord

And that I believe in my heart
That God raised him from the dead.
I call on the name of the Lord,
And leave the rest up to God.
And I hope you do, too.
This is, indeed, Good news to
Everyone who has doubts.

Our passage from Romans
Serves as
Good news to some,
A scandal to others,
And a challenge to all.

What is so scandalous about this passage?

Like many of you
I grew up in a conservative,
hard working,
God fearing
German household.
I was taught to play by the rules,
Don't get in trouble,
Go to church,
Work as hard as you can
for as long as you can
and give it your best effort.
We were taught that it is
Better to be in the business
Of providing charity
Than receiving charity.
In other words,
"It is better to give
than it is to receive."

Our American culture compliments this attitude:
This is the land of opportunity
Where anyone can pick themselves up by their boot straps
Where the only thing that can limit you is your ability to dream.

Any child can grow up to be an astronaut
Or find the cure to cancer.
(We hear a lot of this during election
season, don't we?)

All of which is to say:
Hard work should be rewarded
And entitlements are reprehensible;
They are
A sign of laziness, slack, and sloth,
A cause for disdain.
This is the attitude:
"I've spent all my life in the church,
years of Sunday school and worship,
supplying turkeys and pies for every
dinner.
I've paid my money!
I've put cash in the plate every Sunday!
And along comes a 'Johnny-come-lately'
Who, like the thief on the cross
Makes a last minute confession
And up they go,
Being sat right at the right hand of Jesus.
Well, what about me?"

Those of us who profess to hate
entitlements
Find ourselves most guilty of practicing
them.
Irony bites, doesn't it?

It is a scandal that Jesus reached out to
The least, the last, the lost ...
And not to good, faithful people
Like, we believe,
ourselves to be.
The healthy have no need of a physician,
Jesus was fond of saying.

I am not saying,
Like first and second century Christians
were fond of believing,
That we should kick back,

Eat, drink, and be marry,
And plan for a last minute,
Death-bed confession of faith
to save our sin-filled soul.
Jesus does call us to faithful living:
Following God's Law,
Regular worship,
Acts of charity and outreach,
And belief in Christ.
If we have knowledge of this
Than we must practice this;
But it is not God's standard of measure
For salvation.
Our ways are not God's ways.
God has chosen the criteria
And used the apostle Paul to report it:
"Everyone who calls on
the name of the Lord
shall be saved."
Our sense of fair isn't important.
God set the rules,
And like it or not,
That's the way it is:
God's in charge,
God made the rules,
And God follows those rules.
Call on the name of the Lord,
And you will be saved.

Our passage from Romans
Serves as
Good news to some,
A scandal to others,
And a challenge to all.

So, what's the challenge?

The challenge comes at the end of our
passage:
How are they to call on one
In whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe
in one of whom they have never heard?

The apostle Paul
Is clearly laying down the gauntlet:
The disciples of Christ are responsible for
The propagation of the Gospel.
We are charged with witnessing to Christ,
Spreading his story,
Sharing our belief,
And leaving behind a copy of the written
Gospel
When we depart.
We are not charged with sharing it with
just one.
We are charged with sharing it with the
entire world.
"Go therefore into all the world,"
Jesus commissions us.
"Baptize in the name of the Father, Son,
and Holy Spirit;
Teach them all that I have taught you."

For many years, I have kept the Gideon's
at arms length;
Primarily because of their gender
discrimination.
But I am warming.
They are spreading the Gospel,
The Good News of Jesus Christ
To every corner of the world,
To every culture,
In every language.
For many years, I have kept an arms
length
from the evangelical movement in
America,
especially their thirst for politics.
But I have to admire
their zeal to spread the Gospel.
Goodness, we, in the United Methodist
Church
come from an evangelical background
ourselves:
And it can be seen in our own General
Board of Global Missions.

We still send thousands of life long
missionaries
To just about every nation on the planet.
We deploy tens of thousands short term
"Volunteers-in-Mission" we call them,
mostly to places of greatest need in our
own country.
And every last one of them is charged
with
Spreading the love of Christ
And the Gospel of his Good News.

That's what we are doing as a people,
But, what are we doing as individuals?
Are we living up to the challenge,
Set for us by these words of the apostle
Paul this morning?
We live in a sea of people
Who have never heard the name of
Christ,
Or who have never listened to a call to
follow him.
We claim to be a Christian nation,
on the one hand,
Yet, we know that most people have
never heard the Word,
And fewer less have been convicted to
follow the Word,
On the other.
People can't call on the name, if they
don't know the name.
This passage isn't a command
For each of us to go out,
become a preacher,
and to join the evangelist circuit.
But it is a call for everyone of us
To share the love of Christ and his
promise
With our children,
With our friends,
And with our neighbors.
And actions speak louder than words.
No one is going to listen

If we are a go to church Christian on
Sunday,
And a sin filled character the rest of the
week.

Dearly beloved,
Everyone
who calls on the name of the Lord,
Everyone without exception,
Will be saved.
Call on his name early and often
And you will begin to live,
Years before you die,
The salvation that is promised.
This is Good News!
This is Good News to those of us with
doubts.
This is a scandal to those of us who
believe in entitlements.
And this is a challenge
to every disciple of Christ:
to bring his name
to those who have never heard.
Amen.