

Pastor Russell Lackey
www.reflutheran.org
Romans 10:8-15

Our little secret

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: **9**That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10**For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. **11**As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." **12**For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, **13**for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." **14**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? **15**And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

This week I had a chance to hear the gospel. At the LBI event, Dr. Tom Pearson taught on Romans 1-3. He did a wonderful job teaching that the righteous, by faith, will live (Romans 1:17). He also told us that the way Paul argues for the gospel in chapters 1-3 is the key that unlocks the rest of the epistle. Let's see if he is right.

In Romans 10, our reading for today, we hear some strong statements by Paul:

- "It is with your heart that you believe and are justified" (10:10). If you remember, Israel wanted a new heart to fulfill the law. They thought that with a new heart they would be obedient. However, in chapter 1, Paul tells us that it is faith (not works) that makes us obedient (1:5).
- "Anyone who trusts in him [Christ] will never be put to shame" (10:11). Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (1:16).
- "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile" (10:12). Paul said, "All [Jew and Gentile] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all [Jew and Gentile] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (3:23-24).

Dr. Pearson, this really works.

As Lutherans, we know the importance of the gospel. We know that works do not save us. We know that being a good person does not get us into heaven. The righteous, by faith, will live. Our catechism teaches this. Our hymns teach this. Our sermons teach this. You could say that the gospel is what we do.

My wife Jamie loves this about the Lutheran church. She grew up in a church that spoke very little gospel. In fact, she had never heard that she was justified by grace through faith. She never heard about the mercy of God.

What does the mercy of God look like? It looks like Peter walking to Jesus on the water. Peter is doing fine until he looks around. As he begins to sink, he cries out for Jesus to save him. Jesus could have said, "Peter, I have just fed the 5000, surely you should get it by now. Peter, you are as dumb as a rock. You deserve to sink like a rock." Instead, in mercy, Jesus reaches out to Peter, and saves him by pulling him out of the water." That is God's mercy!

I am not telling you anything new. You know the gospel. You know the mercy of God. You have heard it many times.

Have you spoken the gospel to any one? Faith comes by hearing. Have you shared the gospel? The righteous, by faith, will live. Have you spoken the words of eternal life to them? To our shame, most of us have not. It seems the gospel is our dirty little secret. We know it. We just don't share it.

I have often joked with you that the average Lutheran invites someone to church once every 34 years. I have then told you to invite three people during the week so that you will never have to do it again. This is a joke. However, our reluctance to witness is no joking matter.

To encourage us this morning, I have asked Dr. Tom Pearson to share a few stories about what happens when individuals and a Christian community actually speak the gospel.

[Dr. Pearson gave testimony to the power of God's Word]

"O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare your praise" (Psalm 51:15). We must not keep silent. The silence is the darkness, and the darkness is the darkness of the tomb. But Jesus has been raised from the dead and has broken the silence forever. So speak it! Tell of the death and resurrection of Jesus until others get a taste for the kingdom of God. Speak of Jesus reaching down into the waters of baptism to save us. There is no shame in the gospel. Break the silence. Let the bird fly. Let the Spirit take wing! It can't hurt us and you'll be surprised – for it is the power of God to save us, both now and forever.

**In Jesus Name,
Amen**