



Lamb of God Lutheran Church – Columbus, Ohio
June 25, 2017 (Presentation of the Augsburg Confession)

Preacher: Pastor Timothy Wagner

Sermon Text: Romans 10:5-17

Sermon Theme: You Have the Saving Word

⁵ Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶ 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) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ 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: ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes 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 anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.



The year was 1530. The Holy Roman Empire, which included much of Europe, was being threatened from the east by the Ottoman Empire. Emperor Charles V needed to defend his territory. But there was a problem. The empire was divided.

Thirteen years earlier, a German monk by the name of Martin Luther had posted 95 statements or theses on the community bulletin board of the day – the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The statements called for discussion of some teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that Luther believed did not agree with the Bible. Almost overnight, these statements spread throughout Europe, finding supporters almost everywhere they went.

But the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church weren't really willing to discuss the teachings. In 1520, the Pope issued a statement, calling Luther a heretic or false teacher. In 1521, Luther was called to appear before Emperor Charles V, who himself was a Roman Catholic and whose power was closely connected to the Pope. Luther was commanded to take back what he wrote in those initial statements and in other things he had written in the years since. When Luther refused to compromise what he saw as the clear teachings of the Bible, he became a marked man. Anyone could kill him at any time.

But that wouldn't put an end to Luther and his teachings. Several princes within the Holy Roman Empire sided with Luther, agreeing with his biblical teachings, with his opposition to the abuses of power by the Pope and the Emperor, or both. Luther was protected, and more and more people were studying the Bible and rediscovering key truths that had been lost or denied by the Church. The Empire was divided, with some territories and their princes siding with Luther and others siding with the Pope and the Emperor.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire was threatening Europe. And Emperor Charles V needed a united military force to defend his empire. And so he called for a meeting in the city of Augsburg in 1530 to try to put an end to the division. Through discussion and confrontation, he hoped to bring the Lutheran princes and theologians back into the Roman Catholic Church. And he invited the princes to present a confession of what

they believed.

Philip Melanchthon, Luther's fellow professor at the University of Wittenberg, wrote the confession, consulting with Luther, who had to stay away, so that he would not be killed. The princes agreed to it and signed their names. They insisted that their confession be read aloud. And, on June 25, 1530, it was. To try to exclude the people, it was read in a small chapel instead of in the large city hall where the rest of the meeting was. But the windows were open, and Dr. Christian Beyer read the confession in German loudly and clearly, so that the people who gathered outside could hear it as well.

The princes spoke the truth clearly, showing that they understood what Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 10. They had the saving word. They believed it and they confessed it.

487 years after that day in Augsburg, and over 1400 years after Paul wrote these words to the Christians in Rome, we have the same saving word. What will we do with it?

Maybe the more important question to answer is what does it do to us? The message we have heard and proclaim is not about what we do. At the beginning of our text, Paul says there is a message that points to what we do. He calls it "**the righteousness that is by the law,**" and he quotes Moses when he writes, "**The person who does these things will live by them**" (v. 5). God gives us his law. And if you keep all of it all of the time, you can get right with God and earn eternal life. But that is impossible for us. Ever since the first people disobeyed God, we are all incapable of meeting the law's demands.

So we need another way. And Paul calls that "**the righteousness that is by faith**" (v. 6). And this righteousness is all about what God has done for us. Quoting Moses again, he says that we don't have to go up to heaven or down to the grave to get Christ. We don't need to do anything to make Jesus want to come and save us. We don't need to look for him or invite him into our hearts. We don't need to finish Christ's work for him or help him in any way. He did it all for us.

That's really what we confess when we say, "Jesus is Lord." "Lord" is the name God chose for himself, when he promised to rescue his people from sin and death. When we confess, "Jesus is Lord," we are saying that Jesus is the one who perfectly fulfilled God's promise of rescue. Jesus is the one who crushed the power of Satan and broke the chains of sin and death. Jesus is the one who took the punishment for our disobedience to God's law and gives us his righteousness, his life of perfect obedience, as a gift. Jesus is the one who has saved you and me and every sinner from the curse of death and won for us the rich blessings of life with him now on earth and forever in heaven.

There is nothing left for us to do. Any claim that we have to do something to be saved takes glory and praise away from Jesus. That was a central message of the confessors in Augsburg in 1530, and that is the central message of Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has saved us who were incapable of saving ourselves. We receive the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of eternal life by simply trusting that God has done it all, by simply believing that Jesus is who he says he is and has done what he says he has done for us. In other words, we have righteousness and eternal life by faith. Paul explains, "**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.... 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'**" (v. 9-10,13).

But how do we get faith? Paul answers that question with a series of questions at the end of our lesson. His explanation concludes with this statement: "**Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ**" (v. 17).

When we hear God's Word, that Word has power. It changes our hearts. It takes our hearts that are sinful and self-centered by nature and turns them into hearts that trust that Jesus has taken away our sins. It turns them to hearts that call on the Lord for help in need and overflow with the blessings of his love.

God's Word works a powerful change in us that nothing else can accomplish. Do we sometimes lose sight of that? We hear God's Word day after day and week after week. It doesn't change. The message is the same today as it was when we first heard it. And even though Paul says that "Faith comes from hearing the message," we've shared the message with others, and they haven't all believed it. When God's Word becomes familiar, do we ever lose interest? When God's Word doesn't seem to live up to its life-changing promises, do we ever go searching for something better – or at least something to help make the message more relevant or more powerful?

How foolish we are when we do this! Paul says to each of us today, "You have the saving Word." Through his powerful Word, God has saved us. He has brought us from unbelief to faith, from death to life. And so we want to keep hearing that Word, reading it, studying it, listening to it. Through that Word, we are assured every day that Jesus has saved us from sin. We are assured that all of our sins are forgiven – even our sins of neglecting his Word or underestimating its power, even our sins of stealing God's glory by seeking his grace by our own efforts. We are assured that we are righteous before him now and forever. That good news of God's Word comforts our hearts and strengthens our faith every time we hear it.

And we don't want to keep such good news to ourselves. Paul points out that what we believe in our hearts, we naturally also confess with our mouths. You have the saving word, and by God's grace you confess it. You confess it here in God's house, as we sing and speak the truths of that Word to one another. You confess it in your actions, as you live out the peace and joy that the good news of God's Word gives to you. And you confess it in your efforts to make sure that others hear the saving Word that you have heard.

God wants to use that saving Word to change the hearts of others. It is the only way they can be saved. And so Paul helps us to see the important role we do have. It's the same role he had and the same role the Roman Christians and the German confessors had – to confess the saving Word and to send out others to confess it where we cannot go. And when we bring that good news of peace to others, Paul says with Isaiah the prophet that we have beautiful feet as messengers of such life-changing good news. And through that powerful Word, hearts are changed and lives are saved.

What they stood for at Augsburg was no small thing. The heart of the good news was at stake. The saving Word was being denied and replaced with a counterfeit. Those princes had the saving Word. By God's grace, they believed it. And by God's grace, they confessed it. By that same awesome, undeserved love of God, you have the saving Word, through which God assures you that eternal life in heaven in yours through Jesus your Savior. You have heard and believed the saving Word. And now, you confess it. God grant that we may continue to believe and confess that saving Word until faith turns into sight and promises become reality in eternal life. Amen.

Lessons for June 25

Isaiah 55:6-11

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the LORD.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Romans 10:5-17

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Matthew 10:32-39

³² “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

“ ‘a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”