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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 17, 2016
2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Deuteronomy 6:1-9, John 1:36-51
Hymns: 343; 352; 307; 313:1

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Romans 10:12-21

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,

Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

"Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the world."

19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:

"I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation,
I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."

20 But Isaiah is very bold and says:

"I was found by those who did not seek Me;

I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”

21 But to Israel he says:

“All day long I have stretched out My hands

To a disobedient and contrary people.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Butterfly effect.

This is the idea that every action has a far greater effect on what happens in the world than people would ever imagine. It is part of what is called “Chaos Theory.” The implication of all this is that actions always have unintended consequences and results that reach much farther than we could ever imagine. There is always some element of truth in the vain philosophy of this world. It may indeed be truth that we can’t know how far reaching of an effect some of our words or actions may have. However, we should not buy into the idea that all the world is in chaos, that there is no plan, no intent, no grace extending from the Almighty to this sinful world. Indeed what we learn from the divine record of God’s Word is that there is a plan and an intent and a power that overrides all the evil and all the chaos that sin brought into this world. What we learn from our text this morning is --

THEME: The Far-reaching Grace of God in Christ.

There are many who declare that a sincere faith in the existence of a god is all that is necessary for salvation.

There are many who have decided that the fact that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16) must mean that all will be saved no matter what sin they cling to in life, or what they believe.

To say that these ideas are false leads others to declare that opposing a universal salvation demeans God and His grace. Nothing could be further from the truth. God, in grace and love has reached out to an evil and perverse world in His grace. He has not played favorites. He **“desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:4). So our text declares this amazing truth—

I. Whoever Calls upon the Name of the Lord Will Be Saved.

Romans 10:12-13 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

There are two important conclusions that we need to draw from these words. The first of them is that the Lord doesn't play favorites. There is not a special provision made for the Jews to be saved. Neither is there a special or different manner of salvation for the gentiles. Whether Jew or Greek, the Lord is rich in His mercy and grace toward those who call upon Him! Calling upon the name of the Lord requires faith; faith, not just that God exists, but that He is **“just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”** (Romans 3:26).

This is a significant truth for us to understand. When asked, “Why should God allow you into His heaven?”

most people in this world will answer because I tried hard to “keep the golden rule” or “I did more good than bad.” It comes down to merit and self-righteousness. That is not what it means to call upon the name of the Lord. To be righteous in God’s sight one must have faith in Jesus. Jews looked to the law, not only the 10 Commandments, but also the ceremonial law. They were convinced that if they maintained the right ceremonies, and observed the rigorous ordinances which they added on to the law, not only would they appear righteous before men, but God would see them as being zealous toward God, and credit them the righteousness they saw in their own works. There is no difference. All who look to their own righteousness will **not** be saved. There is no difference; all who call upon the name of the Lord, all those who humble themselves before the Lord, confessing their sins and clinging to the righteousness of God in Christ, they shall be saved!

This is the truth that John the Baptist declared to the Jews in preparing them for the Lord’s appearing. When John saw Jesus he pointed to Him and declared, “**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29).

God called John to be a special messenger to proclaim the coming of Christ. So Paul explains that --

II. Faith Comes by Hearing the Word of God.

But --

Romans 10:14-17 “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’
16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

We might think that Paul is stating the obvious, that people cannot call upon the name of the Lord if they have never heard of Him. However many have taught that all the gods of this world are really the same God, the One true God whom we worship, and others simply use a different name for Him. They maintain it is simply a matter of language; same god, different word for god in other cultures.

This lie has deceived many into thinking that it is not necessary for the message of Christ to be proclaimed in other parts of the world. It has even been asserted by some that we do a serious wrong by damaging the cultures of other peoples. Even in America it is currently maintained that the Native American culture was grossly violated by Christian missionaries, and it is important for Native American to return to the Spiritism of their ancestors.

How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? They can't, and if they don't believe in the Lord and call upon His name, **they will be lost!**

How can they hear without a preacher? This is the Lord's decision, to grant us the privilege to be messengers of His gospel. He sent **us** out to preach the gospel in all the world. Yes, we all have different jobs, and different gifts, but we all have one great purpose in this world, to advance the message of the gospel. If you are not called

to be a preacher, as most are not, then you are one of those who sends out preachers in the name of the Lord. Yes, that includes the call you have issued to me to preach the gospel and administer the ministry of the keys on your behalf, with your support in prayer and offerings. However, it goes beyond our local ministry in Austin, or Southeastern Minnesota and Northern Iowa. As a member congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession we are individually members of this synod who are individually involved in a greater ministry. Missionaries have been sent out in **your** name so that people in the distant nations of the world might hear about Jesus and call upon the name of the Lord.

Quoting Isaiah, the Apostle Paul reminds us of the joy and gladness of heart that these messengers of God's grace bring to the people who have been without hope in the world. Yes, we need to pray that the gospel goes forth to the world, and we will pray for that as a congregation yet this morning, but we are commissioned by the Lord to do more than that. We are to send forth laborers into His field. We are to support them, and help them, and pray for them that their labors are not in vain. And their labors are not in vain! Once again in the latest issue of the Lutheran Spokesman we see pictorial evidence of the joy of faith and hope that fills the hearts of these dearly loved souls precious in the eyes of the Lord.

Faith comes by hearing, not wishing, not even by praying, but by hearing the Word of God. The Spirit of God works through the message preached. In the theme statement of this epistle Paul focused on the message of the gospel that the world needs to hear, even though it is spurned by many as folly. Paul confessed:

Romans 1:16-17 “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

The gospel is the means by which the Spirit works in hearts to create faith so that people know the **only true God and Jesus Christ whom *He* has sent**, and so have eternal life (**John 17:3**).

This is God’s earnest desire, and to that end --

III. The Lord is Persistent in His Grace .

One might wonder if we haven’t preached this message enough already? Paul addresses that in terms of the grace of God.

Romans 10:18-21 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: “Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.” ¹⁹ But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: “I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” ²⁰ But Isaiah is very bold and says: “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” ²¹ But to Israel he says: “All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.”

Yes, the message has gone out into the world. Yes, people of the nations have heard. Many have heard and then have neglected to preserve this truth for their children, as so many among us Americans are failing to do now. Even then the Lord doesn’t let it go at that. He

doesn't say I gave that nation one chance at the gospel, and now I will forsake them. He is persistent in His grace because His desire for the salvation of souls is not diminished. Not for the Jew, and not for the Gentile. He reaches out in grace even to a disobedient and contrary people. And so it will be until the end and the coming of our Lord in judgment. That is the motivation for God to keep the world going. It is not that He is incapable of ending things, or that He doesn't care about the evil in this world. It is because of the depth of His love for souls, and His undiminished desire to save people from their sins. And so Peter wrote in his second epistle.

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

All that we see going on in the world is not chaos. It is an extension of God's mercy that the world is not consumed. He has sent His Son into the world to save this world of sinners. He has sent out His gospel message through His people that others might hear and believe and be saved. If there is any true butterfly effect in this world be confident that it applies to your testimony of the truth of Christ Jesus. This word or testimony is accompanied by the power of the Lord that people might know the glory of the Savior and have eternal life in His name. This is the light of salvation that has entered our hearts, and now through us is sent out again to the people of the world, all to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)