

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
November 3, 2019  
Reformation Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 8:31-36  
Hymns: 224; 387:1-4; 774; 377:10 (261:1-3)

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

Sermon Text: Romans 3:19-28

<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (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: Reformation Sunday

While a number of churches may have chosen to observe Reformation Sunday last Sunday, many protestant churches no longer observe Reformation Sunday. Some refer to it as Reconciliation Sunday as they seek to unite churches without regard to differences in doctrine.

It is hard enough for us to overcome the Halloween tradition of trick or treating which has its origins in warding off marauding evil spirits with carved faces on pumpkins. (In Germany they actually carved faces on large turnips.) It was in Ireland that they first left treats out on the front step to appease the ghosts and goblins. Today it is all seen as simply being a little fun for kids, and it certainly is that, but then pretty much everyone forgets that October 31<sup>st</sup> is the anniversary of one of the most significant incidents in Renaissance history. At the time this appeared to be such a little incident! A relatively unknown monk, a parish pastor and university instructor posted his 95 thesis against the sale of indulgences on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. They were even written in Latin so only the educated would be able to read them. But that little incident started a great movement, a work of God to revive the teaching of the true gospel of God's love and forgiveness. This was forgiveness not purchased with money as they supposedly were with the indulgences sold by street vendors, but purchased with the holy precious blood of Christ, God's only Son and our Redeemer!

Once again in our day the truth is being obscured by those who deny sin's guilt, make light of the Scriptures, and

propose that there are indeed multiple avenues to heaven, all possessing ample means to please God.

May the Spirit bless our study of God's Word as He reveals to us the truth of our salvation! We are ----

## **THEME: Justified by Grace through Faith.**

The Lord is very clear in His Word:

### **I. No One Is Justified by the Works of the Law.**

The devil's lie, that lie that is so appealing to every individual's ego, must be dashed to the ground. We all like to think that we are really not all that bad that we deserve eternal death in hell! Human nature always looks for others that are really bad, and then wonders why God hasn't stopped those bad people from doing all the evil in this world. Man assumes that either God is powerless against them, or must not really care after all, or - OR - maybe there isn't a God after all!

The Lord lays out the truth about man's spiritual and moral condition by showing us our spiritual likeness in the mirror of the law.

**Romans 3:19-20** "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

God knows our sin, and if He would stop the evil in this world, and He can, and He will, that would be the end, the end of all the earth. It would be the end for every self-righteous soul out there in the world, for those are the ones who are thinking God ought to strike other's down with lightning bolts from heaven and stop the evil in this world. God put the law out there, first in our hearts, then also written in His Word, **so that every mouth may be stopped**, (Yes, that means you and me as much as anyone

else) from claiming that we are not so bad, that we possess some righteousness, even if it be just a glimmer of righteousness before the Lord because we are **nice** people, at least some of the time. When we take that look at ourselves through the view of the law of God we will see that we are guilty before the Lord. We rebel against the commandments, thinking or even saying, "It's my life! You can't tell me what to do!" We are guilty, YES -- GUILTY before God. "*By the law is the knowledge of sin,*" (v.20) not the way to earn one's admittance into heaven. "*By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight.*" (v.20) You can't justify yourself by being nice some of the time. If one stops and thinks about it human justice doesn't even work that way. You rob a convenience store, you're not going to be found innocent by telling the judge that you didn't rob the bank! Or because you were nice to your mother, (well sort of, most of the time.) It doesn't work that way; and that is even more true with divine justice which requires absolute and perfect compliance with the law of God, "*You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.*" (Leviticus 19:2) That is what the Lord requires, nothing less, not even the slightest bit less than holiness.

No one can get past that by doing some good things, or by giving away loads of money, or trying to be nice most of the time. You can't even get past that by suffering, be it self-inflicted, or other sufferings of this present sin corrupted world.

All that balderdash about works and suffering and self-sacrifice making a dent in our debt toward God was part of the teachings of church in the days of Martin Luther, and those teachings perverted man's view not only of God the Father, but also of Jesus Christ making Jesus a lawgiver and scary, very scary indeed.

Martin Luther was dreadfully afraid of the Lord, and continually looking for ways in which he could appease God. Luther found himself resenting the Lord, even hating

Him for the misery that afflicted Luther's soul. That remains the only possible result for those who seek to justify themselves before the Lord. The law will continue to show them their sin, and condemn them, and lead them to resent the Lord.

But there is another way, not found in the mind of man, or in any of the religions of this world.

## **II. God Reveals His Righteousness in the Word!**

**Romans 3:21-23** "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe, For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

There is a way to be righteous, a way that does not originate in the mind of man, or in the works of man. It originated in the mind of God. This superior righteousness that originates with God is revealed to us in the Word of God, the holy and inspired and inerrant Word of God. It was already revealed in the earliest words and promises of God, these words and promises were recorded for us by Moses and the prophets. They speak to us of this righteousness which comes to mankind separate from the old covenant of the Law. Our Old Testament lesson spoke of this new covenant which is established by the Lord. He provides the righteousness for us and presents it to us in His grace, so that we might be His children and we might know Him as our God. **He** established the righteousness which brings us peace. And it is all laid out for us in the Word of God, in the gospel where the saving righteousness of God is revealed for Jew and Gentile alike.

For there is no difference. There is no difference! It doesn't matter what your ethnicity might be, or the color of your skin, or the language you speak, or even what you have done in the past, be it good or evil. *"There is no difference for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of*

God.”(v.22-23) We all fall short of the perfect righteousness required to gain access into heaven. It is available only through the imputed righteousness of God in Christ. This righteousness revealed to mankind ONLY in Holy Scripture comes to us through faith ALONE!

As Martin Luther studied the Word and read of the righteousness of God being revealed the Spirit opened Luther’s heart to know and believe that this was the righteousness of faith, a righteousness that God’s brings to man by grace through faith. Finally, we may all be assured:

### **III. We are Justified by Grace in Christ!**

What amazing grace the Lord reveals to us in His Son!

**Romans 3:23-28** “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

You may be absolutely, positively assured that you are justified, and since we know that this is not by works of righteousness which we have done, then how was this done?

It was done by grace and grace alone! God in the greatness of His love toward us has declared this world full of sinners to be separated from sin and guilt. How is this possible for God to do without denying Himself, for

God is just and holy in all His ways? He does it in connection with Jesus. *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.”* (Galatians 3:13) Jesus came down to earth, the Son of God became incarnate so that He might serve as our substitute and bear our sin, our guilt, and God’s condemnation for our sin in His own body. He was fully human, and yet His blood was the precious blood of the Son of God! He paid out His life’s blood to redeem us, to ransom us from sin, to pay that debt we could never pay even in an eternity in hell. Christ paid that price. His was the propitiating sacrifice for sin, not just for my sin, or the sin of one nation, but for the sins of the whole world! (1 John 2:1-2)

I know, propitiation is a big word that we don’t use when we are talking about football or hunting or work, but it is a word worth learning. Propitiation means first that what Jesus accomplished with His innocent sufferings and death satisfied the debt of all our sins, and AND it fully appeased the wrath of God. God isn’t mad at you anymore. Because of Jesus God **can’t** be angry with you anymore!

Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross took care of all the sins, so even though the sins of old were all tallied up in an indictment, they were taken out of the way, having been nailed to the cross with Jesus!

That, my friends, is the righteousness of God which Luther discovered as he sat in the library where there was a Bible he could read, and there it was: **“The just shall live by his faith!”** (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38) In His grace God the Holy Spirit has opened our hearts to know and believe this blessed gospel of salvation, (yes, even our faith is a gift of God) and this wondrous righteousness which was secured by Jesus’ death and resurrection comes to us. We are justified before God. *“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Romans 5:1) Paul concludes our text with the question, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded.” We have nothing to boast of, not even our faith. All of our

salvation has come to us freely by the grace of God, and has been secured for us by faith worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And it is the perfect plan, because God left nothing for us to do. It is all done. It is the perfect plan, because it allows God to be both just in all His judgments, and still be the justifier, the One who declares “Not guilty” for the one who has this faith in Jesus!

We already know all this, but you see that’s what’s so amazing! We know all this because God has revealed all this in His Word. We dare not ever take this glorious truth for granted. It must be celebrated continuously, not only on Reformation Sunday when we commemorate the blessings God gave us through His servant Martin Luther, but each and every Sunday, indeed each and every day. It has been revealed to us in **Scripture alone**, that we are saved by **grace alone** through **faith alone** apart from the deeds of the law!

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.