

Sermon - Reformation Day (observed) - 10/26/2024

Text: Romans 3:19-28

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

WHO IS RIGHTEOUS?

Before God we all must plead guilty of many trespasses and sins. The things we do to achieve honor or worthiness before Almighty God are but a stench in His nostrils. Like a full dumpster stinking of garbage are the things we try to do before God to achieve our own righteousness. For the only way that a person could be considered righteous before God is that they were able to somehow live a perfect life in accordance with the Law which God gave to Moses. To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. So St. Paul in our Epistle lesson from Romans 3 states, **“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.”** So the whole world is being accountable before God and every mouth must remain silent because there is none who can boast before God that they have done anything right. Instead, we come here as those who are under the law without boasts in our mouths and with nothing in our hands to offer before God. Indeed, we come like corpses of rotting flesh full of our sinful lusts and desires, for no one may come before God and be considered righteous because they did what was commanded of them as St. Paul continues, **“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law**

comes knowledge of sin.” Consider the rich young man whom we heard about for the last 2 weeks in our Gospel reading in Mark 10. He came before Jesus and asked, **“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”** Jesus responded that he should keep the 2nd table of the law; namely to love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said he had kept those commandments from his youth. Oh, that we would be able to keep even these! Yet, Jesus loved him and responded that he lacked one thing. He should go and sell all he has. With the law, comes the knowledge of sin. The more we study the law, the more we realize the ways we have not kept the law. Have you ever considered that to keep the law is what Jesus describes to the Pharisees, **“You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”** (Mt. 22:37). So to keep this command, your heart, your soul, and your mind must agree; that you love the Lord your God with your whole self. Not just with your body for one hour each week. For your heart is full of desires and longing, and those who do not have a rightly ordered love of the Lord are full of sinful desires. So let us pray, “Your soul, then, is next. You are being attacked in a spiritual warfare constantly as Satan lies in your ears everyday seeking to lead you astray and desiring that you take the coward's way out by just letting the lies turn your very soul itself dark. We mourn and pray for those whose souls have been attacked and have been overcome with unbelief as we pray, “Kyrie, eleison” which means “Lord, have mercy!” Likewise, the Psalm of

David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."
(Ps. 51:10) Finally, your mind. Even your thoughts bring judgment on you in the holy courts of heaven. St. Paul in Romans 12:1-2 says, **"I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."** So your mind is to be renewed just as Paul says in his letter to the Philippians 4, **"Rejoice in the Lord always... by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."** So your mind will be guarded by the peace which God gives in Christ Jesus; namely His death on the cross which won for you salvation as He drank the cup of wrath down to the dreggs; which means He drank it all. There is no wrath left from God for sin because He has poured out that very wrath on His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life.

So our reading in Romans 3 continues at verse 21-22 saying, **"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the prophets bear witness to it - the righteousness of God through**

faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” As the law showed our sin, so the righteousness of God shows our sins forgiven. This is manifested for us; meaning that it is clear and obvious through faith in Jesus Christ that we have righteousness with God. This promise is for you, it is for your children, it is for anyone who repents and believes the Gospel no matter what sins they have committed. For Paul continues saying, **“For there is no distinction: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.”** So, whether you have believed for your whole lifetime that the blood of Jesus covers your sins and gives you righteousness, or whether you confess faith in Jesus on your deathbed. The same promise is yours that Jesus gives to the thief on the cross next to Him who believed in Jesus saying remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus said to him and likewise to all who believe, “Today, you shall be with me in paradise.” By faith, this man believed and was justified. By faith Abraham in Genesis 15:6 believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. He was counted righteous before God by faith, so we also receive this righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ.

This message is the Gospel and it allows us to glimpse into the very will of God Himself just as Paul says in Romans 3, **“This was to show God’s**

righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” The Lord our God shows us His righteousness. He is just for condemning the sins of the world which were laid on His Son from the beginning of the world until the death of His Son Jesus Christ on the cross. For our God, being just laid the sins of the world on His Son and those sins were paid for with His holy and precious blood that you and I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom in everlasting righteousness and innocence forever, and He is also the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. No other sacrifice is pleasing before God, and no other work will gain for you eternal life. Indeed, any other sacrifice is to trample and spit on the blessed sacrifice of the Son of God who is enthroned in glory at the right hand of the Father to whom we will join with the courts of heaven in just a few minutes singing, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth.” And there our Lord will truly be in body and blood offering forgiveness of sins, life and salvation for all who believe. For our Lord took the bread and said, **“Take eat, this is My body, given for you.”** In the same way, our Lord took the cup and said, **“Take drink, this is the New Testament in My blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”** Our Lord is not sacrificed again as if His death on the cross was not enough to cover the sins of the whole world for all time. Instead, His death reigns as the

moment of the glorification of Jesus on His throne the cross wrapped up together with His resurrection and ascension. Now our eyes are opened just like the eyes of the disciples on the road to Emmaus whose eyes were opened with the breaking of the bread and then Jesus vanished from their presence though, He was still present. For in the Lord's Supper our eyes are opened today to see the Lord present and fulfilling His for all who believe.

Therefore, Paul concludes, **“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”** No works will justify before God or make us righteous. Instead, we are justified truly by the grace of God alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone whose death gives life and whose resurrection is proof of the resurrection of all who believe in Him.

This is most certainly true. Amen.