

JESUS IS LORD
Sermon for the 10th Sunday after Pentecost, 2020
Romans 10:5-17

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Second Reading from before, Romans 10:5-17: ⁵ **For Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the Law, “The person who has done these things will live by them.”** ⁶ **However, the righteousness that is by faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (which means, to bring Christ down)** ⁷ **or, “Who will descend into the depths?”** (which means, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ **Rather, what does it say? “The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” This is the Word of faith, which we are preaching,** ⁹ **that if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** ¹⁰ **For with the heart a person believes, so that he is counted righteous, and with the mouth a person confesses and then he is saved.** ¹¹ **For the Scripture says, “The person who believes in Him will not be put to shame.”** ¹² **For there is no difference between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is over them all and gives His riches to all who call on Him.** ¹³ **For “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** ¹⁴ **How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? Moreover, how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How are they to hear without a preacher?** ¹⁵ **How are they to preach unless they are sent? As Scripture has said: “How beautiful are the feet of those who tell good things as Good News!”** ¹⁶ **However, they have not all obeyed the Good News. For Isaiah asks: “Lord, who has believed our message?”** ¹⁷ **Therefore faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your Truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

As Christians, we must confess our faith. What is that confession? For those who are baptised into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the answer should be simple: *“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord... [and] in the Holy Spirit....”* That is our confession, and it must be a confession that we not only confess as individuals but also together *in public*. If our private and public confession is not one and the same, then it really is no confession at all, and soon becomes like a house built on sand.¹ To confess one’s faith has always been a public matter in the life of the people of God, especially in their worship life. As the community of believers gather together, they, *in their liturgy*, make a public confession of the faith. They unite themselves in heart and voice in their confession of faith: in the One in whom they have placed their hope. Such public confession dates back to when the Jews, in their synagogue liturgy, confessed their faith in the words: *“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one!”* (Deuteronomy 6:4).

This liturgical tradition continues to this very day as we, being the people of God, continue to confess our faith in the words of one of the three great ecumenical Creeds: the Apostles’, the Nicene, or the Athanasian. Such a confession of faith is *never* a private act but a public confession. In other words, the faith we confess “in here” must be publicly acknowledged “out there,” in the world in which we live. It is imperative that we speak what we believe; that we confess with our lips what we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, whom God has raised from the dead, for our salvation. This is what Paul means when he writes, **“that if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** ¹⁰ **For with the heart a person believes, so that he is counted righteous, and with the mouth a person confesses and then he is saved.”** It is crucial, as it is each day of our lives, that we *do believe and confess* that **“Jesus is Lord.”**

So we are to daily confess that **“Jesus is Lord,”** and yet, where may such confession lead? Often to persecution – even to the point of losing your life. While we do not lose our lives in Australia for confessing our faith in the Lord -

¹ Matthew 7:24-27

perhaps the worst thing to happen to us if we openly confess our faith is that a few harsh words are said against us - yet confessing our faith seems to be the last thing any of us want to do. Why? Why is it so hard to boldly proclaim our faith? Why don't we want to discuss our faith with others?

It is very unfortunate that often what we hear in church stays here - we do not take the Gospel with us out into the world. We do not share the hope that is within us. We would much rather keep it to ourselves. In fact, at times, it is often difficult for others to tell if we are indeed Christians. Think about our speech, for example. Our speech does not always indicate to others that we do confess Jesus Christ. Often this conclusion is drawn by what we say, perhaps in our cursing or in our participating in spreading rumours and gossip. However, what is even more telling is what we do not say. Do we confront openly unrepentant sinners as God has commanded us? Do we point out to such sinners that what they are doing is a sin against God? Do we admonish them and tell them that, if they continue to live in a state of unrepentance, they are living outside of God's grace and placing themselves in danger of being forever condemned in their sins? Or do we show our approval of their openly unrepentant, sinful lifestyles by *saying nothing at all*, giving in to the godless ways of our society and our world?

On the other hand, what comfort do we bring to those who are genuinely hurting and need to hear the sweet words of the Gospel? Everyone goes through rough patches. When we see someone struggling, do we comfort him or her with the scriptural truth that God will not give this person more than he or she can bear² and that God will at the right time give him or her a way out from underneath the burdens? Do we assure this burdened person that he or she is not alone, that God is always with him or her, or do we merely give a pat on the hand and say condescendingly, "*There, there. Everything will be just fine*"? Oftentimes, when we do see someone hurting, we turn and walk away. Maybe we feel we don't know what to say and don't even realise that just a few words of the Gospel can bring so much comfort. If we adopt for ourselves a "me and Jesus and no one else" mentality, only looking after ourselves, if we have a faith that is not publicly confessed - a faith that is not shared - then that is a faith that does not grow but soon shrivels and dies. Where there is no sharing, there is no growth. Where there is no learning, there is also no growth. All of this can be traced back to our receiving poor instruction in years past, or our unwillingness today to be instructed, or even both.

But this does not negate our need to gladly hear and learn the Word and to confess the name of Jesus. People still have time to repent and believe the Gospel and to confess the name of Jesus, but the time is quickly drawing to a close. With all the recent world events, so many people today are saying "The end must be near!" Maybe it is - we don't know. Instead, with Paul, we need to repeat the words he spoke to the Corinthians, "*Now is the favourable time. Look! Now is the day of salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2). *Now* is our opportunity to confess the name of Jesus here together *and* out in our daily lives. Now is the time to tell others what we believe, teach, and confess, namely, that on the basis of Holy Scripture, Jesus Christ, true God yet true man, took upon Himself our human nature, assumed our sinfulness, and died to make satisfaction for our sins. The name of Jesus means, "*The LORD saves*"³. Jesus has lived up to His name, for He has saved us from our sins, from eternal death, and the fires of hell, and, accepting the payment of His only Son, God has raised Him from the dead. This we proclaim, believe, and teach. This we confess, for God has given us this reality and the hope we have in His inspired, inerrant, and unchanging Word. The hope that we have and the power that God's Word has, lies in the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. By the Holy Spirit, we believe God has raised His Son, Jesus, from the dead, and we confess this same Christ.

The first Christians had this joy so much so that they could hardly contain themselves. Even when Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire, these first Christians continued to worship the Lord as they met in fellow believers' homes. They believed in Jesus Christ and confessed His name in their worship of Him. They were eager to make this confession of Christ, even in the midst of persecution. They knew which homes were those of fellow believers and were able to worship there before the legalisation of Christianity, which happened under the emperor Constantine in the year 313. Soon after, church buildings were built and congregations flourished.

Surely, we must have the same zeal for the Lord. Earlier Paul had written to the Romans, "*For 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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'The just shall live by*

² 1 Corinthians 10:13

³ Matthew 1:21

faith,” (1:16-17). Through this faith, we have access to our heavenly Father, making our requests known to Him in Jesus’ name, for **“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**

When we call upon the name of the Lord, we are confessing our faith in Him, as we unite our hearts and voices in our confession of and prayer to Him, and Jesus continues to speak to us through the written witness of the Apostles, and through faithful pastors, as they preach from the faithful witness of the Apostles. As the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write: **“¹⁴ How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? Moreover, how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How are they to hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ How are they to preach unless they are sent? As Scripture has said: “How beautiful are the feet of those who tell good things as Good News!””**

The Holy Ministry was not an optional extra tacked on to the faith. We are not free to take it or leave it as we wish. No, the office of preaching was created by Christ our Lord. Paul writes that **“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.”** The Lord established the Office of the Ministry for His called servants to be sent to preach the Word.⁴ Therefore, preachers are necessary for the Church.

This is not popular in our society, and it is also not popular with our old Adam, who likes nothing more than to be its own boss, its own shepherd, and its own teacher. Why listen to someone else when you feel that you are the wisest? The flesh always feels that there is no one better to steer the course for your life, yet **“How beautiful are the feet of those who tell good things as Good News!”**

The writer of Hebrews says, *“Remember your leaders, who have spoken the Word of God to you!... Obey your leaders and submit to them! For they keep watch over your souls as men who must give an account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief! For that would not be to your advantage”* (13:7, 17). Don’t misunderstand these words: This statement requires obedience to the Gospel; it does not create an authority for pastors apart from the Gospel⁵. In other words, when the pastor is proclaiming the truth of God’s Word, we must obey him, something that at times can be difficult for us. Of course, we rightly exclude from this those men who preach a false gospel, which is no gospel at all.⁶ We not only have the right to ignore false shepherds, who are wolves in sheep’s clothing, but we are obligated to most seriously mark and avoid them.⁷ But make sure that they are genuinely false! If they preach the Gospel to you, yet they have a few blemishes here and there in their character, then that is one thing, but if they go against the sweet grace of God and teach a Gospel mixed with works, then, by all means, get away from them as fast as you can!

As servants of Christ, faithful pastors must follow His instructions to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ. In order to preach repentance, the pastor must preach the Law that terrifies. He must proclaim the holy life that God expects of His people. The Law terrifies us as it reveals our sin and the punishment we deserve because of that sin. In the Law, we see our blatant and rebellious disregard for Christ’s life and teaching and our ego-driven rejection of His promises. It shows how deaf we are to Christ’s compassionate voice of forgiveness, life and salvation. It shows that even our best works are filthy sins⁸ compared to the righteous standard of God’s perfection.

Thankfully, though, our Lord also instructs pastors to proclaim the Good News of the forgiveness of sins. The message of the Gospel releases us from the vale of sin and death. It brings the peace of God that passes all understanding to us.⁹ The good news is that Christ has come into the world as the great witness to the Father’s abounding love for us. In that love, He suffered and died for our sin and rose again, freeing us from the bondage of sin and death. As repentance and forgiveness of sins are proclaimed in His name, the promised Holy Spirit continues to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify people in the one true faith, making them part of the body of Christ to live with Him forever.

⁴ John 20:21-22

⁵ Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII, 20

⁶ Galatians 1:7

⁷ Romans 16:17

⁸ Isaiah 64:6

⁹ Philippians 4:7

God loves us. God has sent His Son to die for us. God has raised Him from the dead to give us life. God sends His Holy Spirit that we would believe in Him and receive the gift of salvation. By this same Spirit, we unite our hearts and voices with each other's and with the faithful who have gone before us and boldly confess, "**Jesus is Lord.**" Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty and everlasting God, since nothing is hidden before You, and since all hearts are laid bare before You, give us true humility, reverence, and repentance as we now come before Your throne of grace. Do not remember our many sins, but only Your kindness and constant love in Jesus Christ our Lord. We praise You for fulfilling Your eternal election of grace by sending Your Son Jesus Christ to shed His blood, the blood of the covenant, as our Saviour from sin. We praise You for giving us Your Holy Spirit to renew and help us day by day, to produce the results of Your grace.

Rule us by Your Holy Spirit that we may not give way to the evils of idolatry, sexual impurity, unbelief, and other great and shameful sins. Give us a living faith, which will enable us to stand firm at all times, and keep us from grumbling, doubt, or despair. Strengthen us whenever we are tempted, so that we may successfully resist Satan's power.

Help us all to believe Your Word and to heed its warnings, so that we may always do what is right, and live in the faith that leads to eternal life. Increase our hope of seeing Your glory.

We thank You for Your countless blessings in our lives. Help us to use them faithfully and responsibly as good stewards of Your varied gifts, as people who are grateful for all Your love.

Bless Your Church, O Father, so that Your name may be hallowed and Your kingdom may come. Continue to lead Your people to Jesus Christ their rock, and refresh them with the water of life. Equip Your people to proclaim Your truth with wisdom, love, and boldness, so that many more from all nations may call on Your name and be saved.

Convince the people in our country that righteousness makes a nation great, and that sin brings disgrace. Keep its people in Your care, so that honesty, uprightness, truth, and high moral principles may flourish, and all lawlessness, evil, and defiance of authority may be put down. We ask Your special blessing on all who govern, that they may have wisdom to rule according to Your direction, especially during these stressful times.

Guard and protect our homes. Unite parents in mutual love and godliness. Enable them to rule their children well and bring them up in truth and righteousness.

We pray for those who are sick in body, mind, or spirit, for all who are in any danger; for all who are experiencing worry, doubts, disappointments, or defeat. Help them in their troubles, and save them, for Your mercy's sake.

Heavenly Father, You did not even hold back Your Son, but gave Him up for us all; with Him freely give us all things and hear our prayers. And to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

10th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 14)

Job 38:4-18

⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you know how to discern it! ⁵ Who determined its dimensions? Surely you know! Or who stretched a measuring line over it? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ while the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God were shouting for joy? ⁸ Who shut off the sea with doors when it burst from the womb and came out, ⁹ when I made clouds its garment and very thick cloud its infant-wrappings, ¹⁰ when I marked out My limits for it and set its bars and doors in place, ¹¹ and when I said, 'You may come as far as this but no farther, and here your proud waves will meet

opposition'? ¹² Have you given orders to the morning since your days began and have you informed the dawn where its place is, ¹³ that it may take hold of the ends of the earth and that wicked people may be shaken off from it? ¹⁴ The earth changes shape like clay under a seal, and its features appear as in a garment, ¹⁵ that the light of wicked people may be withheld and that their raised arms may be broken. ¹⁶ Have you gone to the lowest limits of the sea or walked in the deep places of the ocean? ¹⁷ Have the gates of death been shown to you or can you see the gates of deep darkness? ¹⁸ Have you fully considered how broad the earth is? Tell me, if you know all about it!

Romans 10:5-17

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the Law, “The person who has done these things will live by them.” ⁶ However, the righteousness that is by faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (which means, to bring Christ down) ⁷ or, “‘Who will descend into the depths?’” (which means, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ Rather, what does it say? “The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” This is the Word of faith, which we are preaching, ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart a person believes, so that he is counted righteous and with the mouth a person confesses and then he is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, “The person who believes in Him will not be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is over them all and gives His riches to all who call on Him. ¹³ For “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? Moreover, how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How are they to hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ How are they to preach unless they are sent? As Scripture has said: “How beautiful are the feet of those who tell good things as Good News!” ¹⁶ However, they have not all obeyed the Good News. For Isaiah asks: “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ Therefore, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.

Matthew 14:22-33

²² Jesus immediately made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. ²³ After He had dismissed them, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone. ²⁴ The boat was already a considerable distance from the shore and was being buffeted by the waves, because there was a headwind. ²⁵ During the fourth watch of the night Jesus came towards them, walking on the sea.

²⁶ When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified. They said, “It is a ghost!” and cried out in fear.

²⁷ Immediately Jesus spoke to them. “Take courage! It is I. Stop being afraid!”

²⁸ Peter answered Him, “Lord, if it is You, order me to come to You on the water!”

²⁹ Jesus said, “Come!”

When Peter had got down out of the boat, he began to walk on the water and went toward Jesus. ³⁰ However, when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid, and, when he began to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him. He asked him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

³² When they came into the boat, the wind died down.

³³ Those who were in the boat bowed down before Him and said, “Truly, You are the Son of God.”