

## The Second Sunday After Pentecost

June 14, 2020

*We will have a series of Sundays with readings from Romans where we study key salvation words. The word for today is righteousness.*

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY:** O God, you rule over all things in wisdom and kindness. Take away everything that may be harmful and give us whatever is good; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**OLD TESTAMENT: Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28** *Fix, tie, teach, talk, impress, these are ways to keep God's Word in your life. It will mean the difference between blessings and curses.*

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth. ...See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

**EPISTLE READING: Romans 3:21-25a, 27-28** *We boast of a righteousness that comes from God.*

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. ... Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 7:15-29** *On which will you build your faith, hope and life: God's Word or man's word?*

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it

fell with a great crash.” When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

June 14, 2020  
Romans 3:21-25a,27-28

The Second Sunday after Pentecost  
Rev. Matthew C. Rauh

### **Righteousness!**

***But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. ... Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.***

Throughout these summer months, we will be having readings from the book of Romans. This is what we are going to do. We will look at each reading and focus on a key word from each. Today we will focus on the word, “righteousness.”

Now, what does righteousness mean? Look at the first five letters. Righteousness means everything is “right.” Let me give you an example. A husband and wife get into a bit of an argument. It ends with the wife throwing the husband’s pillow and blanket out the bedroom and slamming the door. Something is not “right” between that husband and wife.

There is something not right between the human being and God in heaven. We know that when God threw Adam and Eve outside of Eden like the wife throwing her husband out of the bedroom. So, how can we make things right with God? This is the basis for every religion in the world. Man knows things are not right and religion is man’s attempts to make things right. How?

Well, let’s get back to our husband and wife. If they both were at fault, what they need to do is come together and admit where he or she was wrong and were sorry. If they forgive each other, then things are right between them and the husband no longer needs to sleep on the sofa.

But what if the wife is right and the husband is wrong? If he doesn’t see or understand that, he will be sleeping a long time on that sofa. But if he looks at himself and sees where he was wrong, then you are on the road to making things right. The problem between man and God isn’t that we got into an argument. God is not some flawed creature who makes mistakes once in a while. God is holy. He is perfect. God is righteous. He is the standard for holiness and all that is good, not evil. It is like an airplane that wants to get to point A to point B. There is only one course or heading that will do it. If that plane veers off even by a couple degrees, it will never get there. God is the standard, the course. The problem is us. We have veered away from the Lord.

#### *I. Why we need a righteousness from God.*

As our text says, ***“But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.”*** That God has to send a righteousness down to us means we can’t send a righteousness up to him.

Why? He explains that in our text. ***“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ...”*** I remember as a kid trying to jump over mud puddles. There we were, my friends and I, and we would challenge each other to jump that puddle. Sometimes you made it, sometimes you landed in the water, and sometimes you fell into the mud puddle and had to explain to mom why you were all muddy.

There is this space between man and God. So man tries to jump over it. The problem is, that space isn't a three foot wide mud puddle. It is the length of the Grand Canyon. No matter how hard we try, we can't jump it. And there is no difference, everyone will fall short. So, the non-believer gets a running start and jumps and falls short. But so will the Christian. The Christian runs and jumps and he or she falls short as well. There is no difference. Christian, non-Christian, man or woman, adult or child, all fall short of God's glory.

The reason is sin. I am not as athletic as I use to be, but I think I can still jump a three foot mud puddle. But if someone challenged me to jump the Grand Canyon, I wouldn't even try. I am not that stupid. Our problem is we don't regard all sin that bad. Take the First Commandment. To fear or love or trust something more than God is called the sin of idolatry. If idolatry is limited to only worshipping a wooden statue, well, I haven't done that. But this isn't some three foot puddle. It is a Grand Canyon. He reminds us that idolatry isn't just bowing down before a stone or wood statue. Idolatry happens when I love something more than God in my heart. It means I trust God when he says he will take care of me, but I commit idolatry when I find more confidence because some cash is stored away in the bank in my name. The puddle isn't three feet. It is a mile wide canyon.

They say close counts only in horseshoes and hand grenades. That is true. Jumping the canyon and getting close isn't good enough. We still fall. That is why we can't muster or stand on our own righteousness.

## *II. How God gives us righteousness.*

But what does the Bible say? ***"There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ..."*** Yes, all have sinned. But this sentence doesn't end in a period. It has a comma because more follows. ***"There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and [all]are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."*** Righteousness and justify come from the same root word. To justify means things are right again with God, but in a special way. It is a courtroom word. It is spoken when the judge slams his gavel and says, "You are not guilty." God says things are right because he calls the lawbreaker a law-abiding citizen.

How can this be? There is another word in our text. It is atonement. In the Old Testament, you recall, God had a special church for his people. Inside that church there were two rooms. The Holy Place is where the priests did their work. The Most Holy Place was where God was. In that small room was the Ark of the Covenant. Inside that Ark was the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, Aaron's staff and a small jar of the manna God used to feed his people in the wilderness. The lid of that Ark was called Atonement which literally means "covering," or the lid. God literally was in that room. It describes how the glory of the Lord filled that room. It calls that lid the footstool of God. And God used that place to drive home a very special point. If anyone entered the Holy Place, he would immediately die. Why? Those stone Commandments at God's feet said why. God looks at man through those commandments and sees how we have broken them.

But once a year, the high Priest could go in there without fear of death, but something special had to happen first. He sacrificed a bull and sprinkled its blood on that atonement lid for his sins. Then he went back out, sacrificed a goat for the sins of the people and sprinkled its blood on that cover. He didn't die because God didn't see him through those commandments and how he broke them. The blood covered over them.

***"...and [all]are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."*** Jesus came, born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and buried. He was the sacrifice. His blood is sprinkled on that atonement cover so when the Lord looks at us, he doesn't see the commandments we break. He sees Christ. That's how righteousness comes from God to us. We are right with God because the guilt of our sins are covered by Christ.

### *III. There is no boasting.*

And now, let's see how we respond. Boy, do a lot of people miss their sports. If only some of our favorite teams can start playing again. We live vicariously through those teams. When they win, we don't talk about them. If we buy their jerseys, we usually don't put our name on the back. We buy a jersey of our favorite player and walk around with his name on it.

That is how we respond to Christ. ***"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."*** Generally, when Christians come to church, they don't come boasting about what they did. "See that Lord? I gave generously in the offering today." Or, "See how I ran errands for my grandmother?" We don't come here to boast about ourselves. If we did, we would be trying to please God with our own righteousness which is flawed and falls far short.

No, when we don't boast about ourselves. We boast like fans of a favorite team. We boast about what God did for us. "Look at us," we say, "we are sinners who never ever could make things right with God. But look at what the Lord did for us. Christ died for my sins. And I don't even have to do anything for that. He gives it to me by faith." We don't come here trusting ourselves. We come here trusting God.

And it doesn't have to be in church alone. Imagine the husband and wife having an argument. Imagine if they stopped they are always right and the other is always wrong. Imagine if they stopped pointing fingers at each other and first pointed fingers at themselves. Then you come together, admit your faults and wrongs and beg for forgiveness. And imagine if death comes near. We don't boast as though God better open heaven or else. We don't boast. We are sure we will go to heaven, even our bodies in the resurrection, because of Christ.

All of this because of a righteousness that comes from God apart from observing any law, a righteousness that comes by faith in Christ. May the word, "righteousness," be very special to us. Amen.