

“FAITH COMES FROM HEARING.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Romans 10:13-21

We have been talking about the sovereignty of God and how He uses it to accomplish His purposes. Don't miss the takeaway in all of this. God is using His sovereignty to save the world, to save sinners. God sovereignly sent His Son into the world to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Don't lose sight of this.

Without the sovereignty of God we would not believe, we would not come to faith, we would not endure and persevere to the end. We would not be saved. This is what God is sovereignly purposing to do in your life.

Our text speaks to how God is doing that.

Vss. 14-15

Back in chapter eight we talked about that golden chain of salvation, five unbreakable links.

Romans 8:29-30 Those whom he foreknew he also predestined ... 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Here in our text we have another golden chain of salvation of five unbreakable links. The first one is from a divine perspective, this one is from the human perspective. Two sides of the coin of salvation.

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?
And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?
And how are they to hear without someone preaching?
15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

Running it backwards, God sends preachers, messengers, ambassadors to preach. And when they preach people hear, and when they hear they believe, and when they believe they call on the name of the Lord and are saved.

The preaching is not just what happens on Sunday morning but what happens whenever anyone tells the good news of the Gospel to someone else.

Picture for a moment a situation where no one is sent, no preacher, no teacher, no evangelist, no missionary, no Christian. How poor would that place be? How dark is that spiritual poverty? No hope, no life, no salvation.

The Gospel doesn't fall out of the sky like manna or rain. The Gospel doesn't happen by chance or by accident. The only place where there is the Gospel, is where God by an act of His special providence has sent someone to speak. And when God does that, it is the hand of God, it is proof of His divine love, the kindness of His grace.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

To call those feet beautiful means the message is of eternal significance and contains the only hope of eternal life. Nothing else in this world is as highly valued, or as greatly praised by God.

Some of you listen to a lot of news, you have your favorite news sources, you read the news, you follow the headlines. Fox, CNN, MSNBC, network news, local news. But is it good news, is it lifesaving, life-giving, soul-redeeming news?

Can you imagine what our lives, our souls, our families would be like if we listened to and read as much of the good news as we do all the other news?

The Gospel is good news like you have never heard before, the best news.

Nothing makes our world more beautiful than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Think of all the ugliness in this world, in our hearts and homes and community, and think how beautiful they are made by the right believing and loving and living out of the Gospel.

Have you have heard the saying, “Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary use words.” Of course our actions are important and they can undermine our message, but we haven't proclaimed the Gospel until we have used words. Hearing the Word of God essential for salvation. There is no place in Scripture where the Gospel is shared without words, without speech.

I Corinthians 1:21 In the wisdom of God, ..., it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Without preaching we will die, without hearing and listening to and heeding and believing, we will die. This is why preachers' feet are beautiful, why anyone who shares the good news of the Gospel has beautiful feet.

Gospel preaching by itself is not enough. There is nothing worse than or more dangerous than being a hearer of the Word and not a doer, being a hearer but not a believer, not an obey-er of the Word. And that is the problem with Israel.

Vss. 16-17

The point of Paul quoting from the OT six times, is to show Israel's culpability for their unbelief.

Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" You know Isaiah 53 right? That chapter should ring a bell for you. Isaiah 53 is the clearest Gospel preaching in the OT, the clearest proclamation of the substitutionary atonement of the suffering servant for our sins.

We heard it in the Lenten Readings last week and this morning.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are
healed.
6 ... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
8 ... stricken for the transgression of my people. ... 12 ... he bore the sin of many.

There it is, the glory of Christ in the glory of the Gospel beautifully proclaimed to Israel. But not all hearing is hearing. There are two kinds of hearing, hearing that leads to believing and hearing that leads to hardening.

Israel was never without the Word, never without the prophets, never without beautiful feet, but she was without faith. Not everyone who heard was saved. The Gospel must be more than heard, it must be listened to and then acted on, it must be believed.

Vs. 18.

Did Israel hear? Were they ignorant, were they uninformed? Did they have an excuse? Why did Israel not believe? Surely there must be a good reason, surely they somehow missed it, could they plead ignorance?

You know, the way we plead ignorance when we get pulled over. Like I pleaded ignorance when I got pulled over on the way to Moscow, about 10 miles this side of Colfax on Highway 26. He said I was going 70 in a 55, and I said it was 65 and he said it was 55 and I said when did it change from 65. Why would it change out in the middle of nowhere? I said I didn't know. I pleaded ignorance, and it didn't do any good. I was guilty of not paying attention.

Next time I drove to Moscow, sure enough there was the sign saying it changed from 65 to 55.

Israel heard. Paul doubles down and quotes David's great Psalm 19.

Psalm 19:1-4 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

The heavens everywhere declare the glory of God. It is available to everyone everywhere.

Thunder and lightning, hail and tornados, hurricanes, the Milky Way, the explosion of color in Lynden in the spring. Mt. Baker, the ocean. All creation screams the glory of God. God is extremely generous in the displaying of His great glory and power and majesty.

They heard alright, there is no denying that. Everyone has heard. You have to be committed to denying God to miss it. Psalm 19 says day after day, night after night, it surrounds us, we are without excuse. No, Israel actively turned away from it, they shut their ears, they rejected it.

Paul compares creation to the Gospel, how Jesus is a continuation of the extravagance of God. Paul is saying this two decades after Jesus, that the Gospel has gone out everywhere. God brought a great persecution on the Christians in Jerusalem and propelled them out into the entire Roman empire, so the Gospel went everywhere. The Jews of Paul's day heard the Gospel. Wherever the Israelites were, there the Gospel was preached.

The Jews had heard the claims of the risen Christ. They could not blame their unbelief on the fact that no one had told them. They heard the Word of Christ.

Vss. 19-21.

From David, Paul turns to quoting Moses at the end of his life, in his final sermon, preaching to Israel, Moses with beautiful feet, pleading with Israel, warning Israel.

This passage is called the Song of Moses. Moses writes these verses into a song Israel must sing.

Deuteronomy 32:16-21 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods;
with abominations they provoked him to anger.

17 They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known,
to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.

20 And he said, ‘I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be,
for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.

21 They have made me jealous with what is no god;

they have provoked me to anger with their idols.

So I will make them jealous with those who are no people;

I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Israel’s unfaithfulness provoked God’s righteous jealousy, so God gives His blessings to another people, to make His people jealous and angry and turn back to God. God will bring the Gentiles into the covenant, until the Jews realize what they have lost.

Israel knew! They sing in their liturgy God will make Israel jealous, by a nation without understanding, by a foolish nation. God is willing to use envy and jealousy to drive people to the Gospel.

God said, “You are my people, but you are obstinate, stubborn, so I will make you angry and jealous. If you won’t have me as your God, then my people will be the foolish Gentiles.”

God says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.” All day long God is still doing that, God is using Christians to make Jews angry and jealous.

One day all Israel will be saved. How will God save Jews? Through us Gentiles. God is endlessly patient, even with the most stubborn and obstinate people.

Implications and application.

Let me close with two implications/applications, two sides of this coin of salvation.

First, remember what Paul said about the Jews at the beginning of Romans 9.

Romans 9:4-5 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. 5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

They had every spiritual blessing. Who are the Jews today? Who has all the spiritual blessings?

We have all the spiritual blessings, we have the Messiah, the Savior, the Redeemer, we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, we have the adoption, we have the riches of His grace lavished on us, we have the sacraments, the church the blessed body of Christ, we have the elders, the preachers, the Word of God in our very own language, we have the church fathers, the history, the heritage, the generations to generations,.

What are we doing with all these blessings? Are we guilty of being obstinate, stubborn, contrary, disobedient, unfaithful? Are we guilty of resisting Him, ignoring Him, running, hiding, loving our idols? Week after week you listen and to what effect? Have you taken it to heart?

God is all day long stretching out His hands to you. All day, every day. Not a day goes by that God is not patiently holding out His hands to you. And He uses all kinds of means and messengers. His voice is always going out. God never stops pursuing the lost.

Make sure we are not abusing, misusing, or not using God's blessings, and hearing but not hearing. Don't ignore the most beautiful gift you have ever been given.

Second, to all of us have heard and believed the Gospel unto salvation, pray for others, and be willing to be sent by God to others, to be beautiful feet. Phil Stevenson preached about this two weeks ago that God has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:19).

Somebody told you, who can you tell? Be willing every day to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

Send me across the room, across the office, across the street, a phone call, a text message or email, to someone standing on the sidelines of a soccer game. Take a friend out to

lunch. Share the good news of Jesus Christ with them. Our world is desperate for good news. We are called to gossip the good news of Gospel.

One of the most beautiful things you can do in this world is get out of your shell, out of your comfort zone and tell someone the good news of the Gospel.

But what if we aren't very articulate, what if we aren't very smart, what if we get tongue tied, what if we think there are others who could do better? What if we are nervous?

The power of the Gospel to save is not in us, not in our own words, but in the Holy Spirit's power to apply the Gospel and change hearts with even the most humble and simple words.

Evangelism is successful not because of us, but because God is sovereign, it is His Word and His power that saves, not ours. He does what we cannot do. Receive it and share it.

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Prayer: Holy Father, cause us to hear and believe and act on what we believe. Thank you for all those who have been beautiful feet in our lives. Open our mouths to love others with the Gospel. Lord, make us instruments in adding to your church those call on your name and are saved. Truly, how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one who brings good news!