

May Newsletter

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 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? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." Romans 10:5-21

As the church has been given the great commission to Go, make disciples, baptize, and teach, it is reminded how that takes place. No creative programs, no theologies of glory. Romans teaches us that we are not saved by the law. How is one to confess that Jesus is Lord... only by the work of the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit work? He works through word and sacrament ministry which are signs that point to where the true church exists. A person that believes in the heart also confesses. But how are they to believe in Jesus unless someone preaches to them and that preacher has been sent. Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. We are saved by God's grace, through faith, in Jesus.

We recall how Israel turned away from the prophets, those sent by God to proclaim the law, repentance, and salvation through God alone. The times we face are no different. Many are disobedient, many have itching ears, many say that they believe in Jesus but their confession is contrary to the word of God. They hold many false beliefs that are contrary to each other and do not agree with the word of God. Yet, you are called to continue to hear the word, to attend church, and to invite others to hear God's word. We know that the Holy Spirit calls you through Gospel, enlightens you with his gifts, sanctifies you, and keeps you in the one true faith. We do not ascend into the heavens to reach Jesus. Rather God the Father has blessed us by sending His Son, Jesus into the flesh, to bear our sin and be our savior. Jesus came to you and still does through His word, through baptism, and through His body and body blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. He came, died, and rose again for you and for all.

Pastor Ficken