**Not Ashamed of the Gospel**

**Romans 1:8-17**

3rd Sunday after Epiphany – 01.22.2023

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, there is a portion of the Epistle lesson missing, the person proof-reading it (the pastor) must have missed something when overlooking the bulletin, but verses 16-17 should be there. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Syria was a great man. When he went to Elisha for healing of his leprosy, and Elisha did not even come out to talk to him, but sent his servant, Naaman was offended. There was no waving of the hands over his leprosy. Elisha didn't make a great show by coming outside and calling upon the Lord. He simply sent a servant with the word that was to be spoken to him.

Of course, he finally went to the river and did as he was instructed, washing in the Jordan River, and he came out clean, healed of his leprosy. But at first, Naaman was ashamed of the instructions that he had been given.

On the other end of the spectrum is the centurion in our Gospel lesson. He wants Jesus to heal his servant, but when Jesus says He will come down and do so, the centurion demurs, he thinks himself unworthy of having Jesus coming to his home. All Jesus needs to do is speak The Word, and his servant will be healed. And then Jesus extols this Gentile for his faith, that he trusts that the word of Christ will accomplish much.

Then we come to our epistle lesson where Paul is thanking God through Jesus Christ for the Christians in Rome. But he wants to come to them as well, he's under obligation to preach the Gospel - to both Greeks and barbarians, both to the wives and to the foolish.

And then we have this glorious verse: *for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to Faith as it is written, " the righteous shall live by faith. "*

 What is this Gospel? From verse 9 we know it is the Gospel of His Son, the eternal Son of God. And from the beginning of the book of Romans we know it is the Gospel that was promised beforehand through the prophets in the

Scriptures, throughout the Old Testament.

If we allow scripture to interpret scripture, we know that Paul is determined to know nothing among God's people except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. But Paul also declares this crucified One is also the One who is resurrected. The gospel that is the power of God to salvation is the proclamation of Christ crucified and raised again to redeem us, and grant us salvation.

Who is this Jesus Christ? He is the very Son of God!

And for what reason did God give His Son to come into the world? To love us!

And how does He love us? By fulfilling the law for us in our flesh, and then sacrificing His flesh unto death upon the cross. The Father accepts the sacrifice by raising Him from the dead on the third day, death could not hold Him.

And why is Paul not ashamed of this gospel? Because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Paul is writing to these Christians in Rome about this Gospel of Jesus Christ. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”* The Greek word for Gospel is euangellion – the evangelon – and it is often referred to as, Good News, and the most literal technical translation might be “news of victory.”

I am sure that most people today do not understand the big problem that took place in regard to the Roman emperors and early Christians. You see, the emperor supposedly was the embodiment of divinity. To make that most clear, the emperor was to be worshiped, for in him was divinity, good fortune, and salvation. So, when we see Christians being persecuted in the early church it was because they claimed Jesus as True God in human flesh – and the would not bend the knee nor acknowledge the Roman emperor as such.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, is proclaiming another Gospel – greater Good News – news of the greatest victory of all, Christ’s victory over sin, death, and Satan. A victory to be enjoyed today, and will be fully enjoyed in perfected and resurrected flesh like unto the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel in the face of everything of the Empire.

Are you ashamed of the Gospel?

In the face of the things of this world – in the face of the things specifically to do with life in these United States – are you ashamed of the Gospel?

Did you sign up to have your name on the Lutherans for Life signature page in the Shawano paper?

Does the Word of the Gospel flow from your mouth in daily conversations?

Do you speak out when God’s name flows from the mouth of others in a manner other than prayer, praise, thanksgiving, or discussions which bring glory to God?

Are you ashamed of the Gospel?

I know there are times I am! I do not do everything in regard to having the Gospel of Christ foremost in my mind!

I worry about what inflation and such things are doing to my retirement accounts.

I do not firmly and whole-heartedly trust that, as God has given me all that I need for this body and life, He will continue to do so when my time of retirement comes.

All too often, when the concerns of this congregation are on things which are not Gospel oriented, I fail to speak out and declare that such things are not the goal of Christ’s Church.

There are times I have avoided confrontation when I should have boldly proclaimed Christ – faithfully directing Law and Gospel to situations and discussions I failed to address.

You know what? That is the whole purpose of the Gospel. There is “News of Victory” over my failures and yours. There is Good News of salvation. It is the Gospel! It is Christ and His Work. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*

It is not about your faithfulness to God as righteousness, but about the “power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” In a very rigid translation of what Paul is saying, The Gospel is the righteousness of God revealed from faithfulness (of God) into faith, just as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Dear friends, God’s Gospel – not only the news of the victory, but the victory itself – is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Why is that, for it is the righteousness of God revealed (in the person and work of Jesus Christ) that His faithfulness is poured into you, granting you or, “for” faith.

Who here has righteousness on their own? Nobody!  
Who here has come to believe the Gospel on their own? Nobody!

Who here can do anything regarding the things of faith in God on their own? Nobody!

I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Christ wins for us the victory over sin and death by His holiness – His life of perfect righteousness – by His sacrifice of His righteousness swallowing up the wages of our sins, death.

Christ’s resurrection on the third day seals that victory.

His righteousness comes to us in the Gospel – through the waters of baptism we are united to His death and resurrection. It is the Gospel that breathes faith into us through this wet Word of Christ.

Christ’s victory is yours as the Gospel speaks forgiveness into every fiber of your being. It is a Gospel for the ear that forgiveness and life are granted to you, and you live in faith toward God and in love toward your neighbor.

It is the Gospel of Christ – His very Body pierced for you – which is sacramentally united to the eaten Word of Christ.

It is the Gospel of Christ – His very Blood shed for you – which is sacramentally united to the Word of Christ you drink.

Water, bread, wine, and your ears are the vehicles by which you receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the means by which salvation comes to you. God’s victory over sin and death are granted that you may have life now – and forevermore.

We are not ashamed of the Gospel – of Jesus Christ – for He is God’s victory for us and to us. Thanks be to God. Amen.