

My favorite TV show used to be NCIS, but I stopped watching when Mark Hamlin left the show. He played my favorite character on the show - Leroy Jethro Gibbs. Maybe one of the reasons that I like this character is that Gibbs is a family name; my grandmother was a Gibbs. If you have ever watched the show, you know that Gibbs had a set of rules by which he operated, and one of these is that there are no coincidences in life. If that's true, then I must have been led to our scripture text for this morning. I had been studying the Book of Romans and then one of my devotional guides focused on a particular passage from Romans. So, this morning let's see what we can learn from the tenth chapter of Romans verses 5 through 15.

Read Romans 10:5-15

There are so many lessons in this powerful passage that we could spend several Sundays discussing them. But in the time, we have this morning; I want us to focus on a few key points. First, in verses 6 and 7, the Apostle Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:11-14 where Moses says that the Word of God is "very near you;" you don't have to ascend into heaven or descend into the abyss or hell to find God or His Word. All you have to do is turn around and accept it. Instead of looking for God in the past or the future, we are to put our trust in Him right here and right now.

The first words in the Gospel of John tell us that the Word became flesh and came to live among us. Jesus came to show us who God is. God is right here and His grace is given freely as we sang earlier; the price for our sins has already been paid on a cross on Calvary by His Son Jesus Christ. In Psalm 46:10, God says: "Be still and know that I am God;" in other words, stop, listen, and open your heart to His presence, which is available to all of us. Some people think they have to come to the communion rail to be saved, but salvation is available right where you are sitting.

All that God asks is that we believe in Him and in His Son Jesus Christ. Then we receive what we do not deserve and can never earn – God's amazing grace which is never ending. Thank goodness for that because unfortunately we will continue to sin from time to time, and will need His forgiveness. Because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are no longer faced with the fear of God's judgment; we only need accept His love. We no longer have to try to win God's favor; we only need to accept the grace, love and mercy which God so freely offers to all who will believe in Him.

We can't explain or understand God's purpose for this world, but we know that He loves us and that if we walk in faith, we will have salvation. It reminds me of a story of a little boy who was flying a kite. It was a fine day for kite flying, the wind was brisk and large billowy clouds were blowing across the sky. The kite went up and up until it was completely out of sight, hidden by

the clouds. "What are you doing?" a man who was passing by asked the boy. "I'm flying a kite," he replied. "Flying a kite, are you," said the man. "How can you be sure? You can't see your kite." To which the boy replied: "I know that I can't see it, but every now and then I feel a tug, so I know for sure that it's still up there." We know God is there, because ever so often, He tugs at our hearts.

So how do we receive this wonderful gift of grace? Paul sets forth two simple steps. First, believe with all your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead; in other words, believe in the Resurrection. To really understand what Paul is saying here, we need to remember what we discussed last Sunday, that in the Bible and Jewish thought the heart was the center of all thoughts, emotions and feelings; to believe with your heart is total belief. Some people only give God "lip service," but their hearts are far from God. And secondly, confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. For if we believe with our heart, we are justified, and if we confess with our lips, we are saved. There must be faith in the heart before there can be an acceptable verbal confession. It is with your heart that you believe and it is with your mouth that you confess. Salvation is ours; it involves inward belief as well as outward confession.

Christianity is belief plus confession. It involves witness before people. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33 that "everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven." I don't know about you, but that is a very serious statement to me. When I stand before God on Judgment Day, I definitely want to make sure that Jesus knows my name and that He knows that while I was here on earth that I made sure that others knew that I was one of His followers. Do you feel the same way?

In verse 9 in this morning's text, we have the basis for one of the early Christen creeds or affirmations of faith: "Jesus is Lord and Jesus has been raised from the dead," like the one for this morning from 1 Corinthians 15. A creed is a formal belief statement, a confession of faith. From the early church to the present time, Christian churches have often developed summary statements of Christian beliefs like the Apostles' Creed that we recite as a body of believers on Communion Sundays; however, each of us should also have our own personal creeds. These are more informal thoughts and beliefs that we have developed through our experiences in life and our walk with the Lord.

When I decided to enter the ministry, I was required to take classes each summer at Perkins School of Theology at SMU in Dallas. In a class on theology, we had the assignment of writing our own personal creed. At first, I didn't like this assignment, but by the time I finished it, I found it to be a very beneficial exercise. I encourage you to sit down sometime and write out what you believe. Who is God to you; how do you visualize Him? Who is Jesus Christ and what is your relationship with Him? And who is the Holy Spirit and how does He impact your life?

In verse 13, Paul quotes Joel 2:32 – “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Christ’s riches are bestowed on all who call on Him. Grace invites us to accept ourselves as forgiven sinners and to trust God to help us change and be renewed. At one church a five-year-old boy was given the part of the angel announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in their annual Christmas play. He practiced his lines over and over: “Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” He was ready; the rehearsals went well, but no one had anticipated the impact of a packed house on the memory of a five-year-old. So, on the night of the pageant as he rushed out onto the stage and saw the crowd, he immediately froze and forgot his lines, but in the spirit of the occasion, he finally shouted: “Don’t be sacred! I’ve got good news for everybody!”

He may have messed up his lines, but he didn’t miss the real message; it’s good news for everybody; God’s grace is available to all who will believe. But beginning with verse 14, Paul asks a series of serious questions. How can people call on someone who they do not believe in? And how can they believe in someone they have not heard about? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? Then Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 – “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.” The question for each of us this morning is: “Are your feet beautiful?”

When Mother Teresa would receive a shipment of shoes, she would invite all the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta to come and take a pair, knowing that each one of them spent most of the day on their feet. Only after everyone else had selected a pair would Mother Teresa take her shoes. They seldom fit. When she prayed in the chapel, she would take her shoes off, and kneel barefoot. Those who knelt behind her could see her twisted and calloused feet, but in the eyes of the Lord they were truly beautiful.

In the last verse of this morning’s text, Paul celebrates the beauty of the feet that carry the gospel. He emphasizes proclamation – how can anyone hear about Jesus unless they are told? And how can they be told unless someone is sent to proclaim the news? Notice that Paul in this call to evangelism does not focus on a golden tongue or eloquent words, but on the necessity of the feet. Preaching the Good News relies less on lofty ideas and persuasive speech than on a willingness to go and proclaim. To go and tell the good news about an event that has changed everything once and for all. This is what Jesus emphasized in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 – “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

10,000 steps, that’s the distance that the average person walks from sunrise to sunset each day of their life. This adds up to about 115,000 miles in a life time; or more than four times around this planet called earth. The question is “are you using your steps wisely?” Are you making a

difference in the lives of others? The single greatest gift that you can give someone is an introduction to Jesus Christ. When was the last time that you told someone about Jesus or even invited them to church?

Now in some circles this is known as evangelism, and to many people this is a dirty or scary word. It is never spoken in many churches. However, according to Paul the opposite is true; it is a beautiful word. Evangelism is the task of the whole church, not just a select few. It is not only my responsibility, but also yours. And in some ways, it is more your responsibility than mine since you know more people here in Rio Rancho than I do. As we read these questions from Paul, we may be thinking about people living in some remote part of the world who have not heard the good news, when in reality it is the people living next door, those in our social circle or even in our own family because we have been reluctant to share with them the story of Jesus Christ and what He means to us.

You don't have to go to the ends of the earth or a foreign country to tell others about Jesus Christ; they are right here beside us. In reality, we are living in a mission field; I would estimate that only about 15 percent of the 114,000 people living in Rio Rancho even go to church; there are opportunities all around us. Just think about those who live on your street; how many of them are actually involved in church? The best definition of evangelism that I have ever heard is: "it's one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread; where to find the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ"

At a certain point in history, Jesus Christ left the marvelous fellowship of His Father and the worship and adoration of the angels in heaven, wrapped Himself in human form and walked across the universe in order to stretch out His hands to people like you and me; to invite us into His fellowship and to extend the love and grace of God to us. He walked across the room; that's all that evangelism is, walking across the room and extending an invitation to another person that may change their life forever.

You know today it seems that people are always willing to invite a person to lunch, to a play golf, to a ballgame, to their service club, but are scared to invite them to church. And I have a hard time understanding this. The church and a relationship with Jesus Christ have so much more to offer than these social activities, such as grace, love, forgiveness and fellowship.

When I was in Socorro, I belonged to the Rotary Club for a while, and every now and then someone was awarded a pin because they invited someone to Rotary and they joined. Think what happens when someone brings another person to Jesus Christ; I bet you that they get more than a pin, don't you? Remember what Jesus said in the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15: "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." The late Paul Harvey issued a strong warning

for the Church when he said that church members have drifted away from being fishers of men to becoming keepers of the aquarium. Today, most churches are more interested in the administrative activities of the church and their social gatherings than bringing others to know Jesus Christ.

When Henry Ford purchased an extremely large insurance policy it was reported in the Detroit newspapers. One of his old friends who happened to own an insurance company read about it and went to Mr. Ford and asked why he didn't buy the policy from him since they were friends and he knew that he sold insurance. To which Ford replied: "Because you never asked me!" How many of our friends can say to us: "You never asked me," when it comes to inviting them to church and sharing Jesus Christ with them? There was a bumper sticker that read: "Friends don't let friends die without Jesus."

In closing, I want you to do something for me. I want you to pray about who God is nudging you to invite to church and then invite that person either to church or one of our activities. If you open your heart and mind, God will provide the opportunity for you. I don't know if you have ever seriously thought about it, but someone's place in eternity may depend on your willingness to walk across the room and extend the hand of Christian fellowship to them. Are your feet beautiful to Jesus? Amen