

2nd Sunday after Pentecost

June 19, 2022

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

(Galatians 3:26)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today’s text for this 2nd Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading Galatians 3:26.

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Here ends our text.

In this age of confusion of personal identity of who one is, Paul doesn’t waffle. But he makes it very clear to the Galatian believers, to whom he is writing, who they are. They are sons of God!

And to all of you believers here at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mercedes, and especially Mark, Briana, and Aiden, who have been preparing to confess your faith in Christ Jesus today, publicly, I say to you all the same:

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

This most amazing declaration can’t be made without the “how”. I can’t call you sons and daughters of God, without this most important phrase, “through faith in Christ Jesus.”

“Through faith in Christ Jesus”. There is no other way to be a son or daughter of God except through faith in Christ Jesus. Maybe that seems obvious to you because you’ve heard Lutheran pastors make sure this phrase is never omitted.

“You are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.” That’s Ephesians 2:8. That’s the Reformation in a nutshell, isn’t it? **“and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”.**

Oh, we should never think for a moment that we need not hear this over and over again! For our sinful flesh tries to convince us that there is indeed a little bit in us doing our part that merits or deserves my sonship of God!

How does Paul begin this chapter 3 of Galatians? “Foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” Paul continues by saying, just answer me this one question.

“2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

Mark, Briana and Aiden, maybe you remember the very first thing that we studied in our confirmation classes. We spent about ½ hour on it the very first day. What is the Law and what is the Gospel? And what is the difference between them. How appropriate that for your confirmation day, Paul spends a good amount of time on the difference in our epistle from Galatians 3 and 4 as he combatted the Judaizers of his day – the ones that were trying to convince the Galatians that to be saved you must law keepers.

Well, what’s the difference between the Law and the Gospel? The Law always accuses, relentlessly accuses you of wrongdoing. It shows you your sins, your imperfections, like looking in a mirror. It gives no relief but only condemns you for your failures. As Paul says in the verses introducing our text, which are so important to understanding our text, the law is a curse, and it curses you.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

Yes, Mark, Briana and Aiden studied the Ten Commandments and it revealed to us how we all have failed miserably. That’s the Law doing its job. It unsettles our conscious and leaves us without hope. Again Paul says, **“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin,”**

The law imprisons us. It enslaves us. Now I know that Mark, Briana and Aiden didn’t come here today to try and feel good about being a prisoner or a slave, right? And none of us either!

But as Paul says, the Law has to do its work as a guard, a tutor, a babysitter show how foolish it is to try and be saved by one’s good works. One’s good works are never the cause of one’s sonship, but the result, the fruit of one’s sonship. And one’s sonship, one’s glorious sonship, can only happen by the Gospel! For it is a gift, a free gift from God, personally given through faith in Jesus Christ!

Here's how Paul completes the sentence we just heard. **“22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”**

The how to sonship is receiving the promise by faith. What is the promise? Well, it's the Gospel! It is the promise that was given to Abraham as Paul says in Galatians 3,

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.” (v.16)

Abraham was promised that one of his descendants would be the Messiah, the Savior. And Abraham believed. So, what happened to Abraham? He was saved.

Listen to this most important Gospel truth in the verses preceding our text.

“just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”

That's what the Gospel does. It counts God's righteousness to a sinner. It justifies you, makes you perfect before God, and blessed, through your faith in the same One on whom Abraham believed – Jesus Christ!

For the Gospel “how” tells us not what we have done to merit salvation, but what Jesus did for us.

Listen to Paul remove all foolishness.

“3 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

The Gospel “how” for all people is what Jesus did on the cross. He became a curse for Mark, Briana, Aiden and each of us, for the whole world to unshackle us from

the accusing finger of the law, remove the bonds of slavery of the law and give to us the promise of the Spirit – freedom of sin, death and the devil.

This is the Gospel! This is the “how” – what God has done for us in Jesus! Listen to how Paul summarizes it in chapter 4 of our epistle.

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

When do we hear this beautiful Gospel in the church year? Christmas time! Jesus was born! And most importantly, He was born under the law to redeem all of us who were under the law and could not escape, so we would be called sons of God.

Luther said,

“The Law did everything to Jesus that it did to us. It accused us and terrified us. It subjected us to sin, death, and the wrath of God; and it condemned us with its judgment It accused Him of blasphemy and sedition; it found Him guilty in the sight of God of all the sins of the entire world; finally it so saddened and frightened Him that He sweat blood, Luke 22:44; and eventually it sentenced Him to death, even death on a cross,”

Jesus accomplished the “how” of salvation for all people by His death and resurrection. And God graciously gives this salvation through faith in Jesus. This is the personal Gospel “how” – through faith – your reception as adoption as sons by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Not only, has God worked through His word to personally grant you this gift Mark, Briana, Aiden and all you believers here at Immanuel, but He has graciously sealed it to you through your baptism! Again, this is a pure Gospel gift. Paul says, **“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”**

Your robe is Christ’s righteousness that covers all your sin, graciously given to you in your baptism. When you were baptized, you literally have put on Christ! Wow! And if you have put on Christ, then that makes you a son of Abraham for you are united with all believers in the same faith.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

There is no confusion of who you are! God loves all people the same! He makes no distinction between Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. You are Christ’s! Therefore you are Abraham’s seed! You are united with the who body of believers going back into time and also then heirs of the same promise, going forward in time. For we are heirs with Abraham of eternal life!

This is Gospel. It is a pure free gift from God through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus for the sins of the world. No more foolishness! And especially today, God gives you Mark, Briana and Aiden and all who have been confirmed in these truths another Gospel gift. For Jesus gives His very body and blood in, with and under the bread and the wine for your forgiveness.

We need to be driven by the law to see our great need of Jesus forgiveness and receive His body and blood often. There is a time of the law and there is a fullness of time of the Gospel. As we repent of our sins, we receive the Gospel fullness of the Sacrament - given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins!

And so, sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus, we live as freed men and women from the slavery of sin. We live to serve our God who has given us His Spirit and eternal inheritance. We live not under the foolishness of the law but under the freedom of the Gospel. All glory to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Amen!

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)