

St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX, 10-31-21 *Knocking at the Door of Your Life*

Romans 3:19-28 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - 26 He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. 27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Justified by faith Luther discovered that on his own he could not make himself right with God and that God's plan for us was not to TRY TO do so. Jesus could not have died any harder on the cross than He did for you and me. His death for us, gaining us peace with our heavenly Father, forgiveness, eternal life and salvation is accessible by faith and trust in Him as Savior. Grace can be difficult to accept since we want to be in control. On the other hand, we don't want to hear God say, "I don't care. Do whatever you want. Just clean up the mess when you're done." Grace requires humility on our part. Paul writes in our second lesson: *23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* Twila Paris has a song about that. The words go:

1) All alone in my own self will Old familiar story So determined to try until I fail
You've been waiting as I learn again, straining to the pressure and you offer me a better way. Hear me pray. Hear me say.

CHORUS: I choose grace, I choose mercy. I choose love and all it means. I choose grace, 'cause I need the power And I need to walk in humility.

2) Just how often have I let You down and all the hope around me break a gentle heart along with mine. You keep holding out Your arms again Just the way you found me and

You carry me across another line. Hear me cry. No more pride. I choose grace, I choose mercy. I choose love...

If we don't choose love, what is our alternative? Bitterness? Suspicion? Even hate? But that is not the way of Christ. We need to repent of our pride, bitterness, and anger. Luther in the Reformation points us to God.

In the beginning of our second lesson, Paul writes, 3: 19 *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law, rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

The beginning of making a faith commitment is out of personal need. The one in need may be aware that there is something more to life than just comfort and convenience, security and possessions, pleasure and even health. For life comes to an end and comfort runs into days of discomfort when relationships are irritated or in conflict or the politics are haywire. Convenience has its problems. Life is never convenient enough for us. Security is fleeting when you consider crime and violence even in schools and now the potential uptick of terrorism. Possessions and income can disappear with turnarounds in the stock market.

Luther discovered that in reading Romans 3 among other passages that he was dependent on a relationship with God and on God's grace. We also need to be reminded through the Holy Spirit, that we are wrong at times in our behavior or thoughts. The Law has its place as Paul writes, 'through the law we become conscious of sin.'

Luther was told by his spiritual father that he would go to seminary to become a priest, to study the New Testament, because Martin wanted to change things. When things got really tough and the Holy Roman Empire and Roman Catholic church were breathing down his neck, that same spiritual father reminded him of Martin's desire to change things. He asked him, 'Did you think there wouldn't be a cost?'

Luther could have stayed a seminary professor and avoided the Reformation. If he had, you and I would likely be Roman Catholics today. The other break off churches such as the Anabaptists and Calvinists all came after Luther, taking advantage of his breaking the ice and surviving. Others who tried to reform the church earlier were killed. Change is threatening, but reformation literally means re-forming.

If people are in power in a country or community and feel that the average citizen doesn't know what's best for him or her so they need to be ruled, we no longer have democracy but an oligarchy, an arrogant rule of a few. There are still people in high office who consider the average citizen incapable of voting wisely or making decisions about their communities. Luther's reformation wasn't his alone. Others like Melancthon and the German princes, priests and nuns who came to the cause were also supporters of the Reformation. A peasant rebellion gone mad was stopped by the princes and Luther supported the law and order of the land, but the deaths were tragic. Take a look at a marvelous DVD called *Luther the Movie*. It's worth purchasing and owning.

Luther wanted change in the Catholic church but never planned on having a Lutheran church. After he went to the monastery, he learned in this heart that he needed a Savior. And to receive a Savior meant asking and trusting in God's grace. It meant seeking the Lord's face as the Psalmist says. When I hear those words, 'seeking God's face,' I picture little babies reaching up toward their mom's and dad's or grandma's and grandpa's face. Listen to seeking God's face from some of the Psalms. (Psalm 17:15) And I--in righteousness I will see Your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing Your likeness.

(Psalm 24:6) Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

(Psalm 27:8) My heart says of You, "Seek his face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek.

(Psalm 105:4) Look to the Lord and his strength; seek His face always.

(Psalm 119:58 NIV) I have sought Your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to Your promise.

Do you seek God's face? What does He mean to you? You may be in a position to be that graceful presence that God expressed through His word to Luther. God may choose to speak through you to someone hungry for God if you let Him and then you can simply say something like, 'Jesus is my life. I find strength, hope and peace with Him. I will pray with you if you want to ask Him to be the Lord of your life.' Then if they are not interested, you can offer to keep them in prayer and be there if they want to talk more.

If they say 'yes,' then you can simply ask them to repeat after you, "God, I am sorry for my sins and I accept your forgiveness for me won on the cross. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come into my heart today. Come into my heart to stay. Thank you. Amen.' A prayer

like that begins their relationship with Jesus as Savior. Offer to introduce them to your pastor for help in discipleship on their journey. Doing nothing more than helping them make a confession of faith in prayer is like the seeds that fell among weeds that choked them or on dry ground or among the birds that gobbled them up. You sowed the seeds but didn't follow up. Stay in touch with them.

Offer to pray with them again about things that are on their mind. Keep them in your prayers. You will have witnessed the birth of a new child of God. Maybe they will consider baptism or join a different church with their family, but you can still walk with them and befriend them as a joyful follower of Jesus Christ. We are called to be and make disciples by Jesus.

Oswald Chambers, a Scottish evangelist, said, "If we are to be disciples of Jesus, we must be made disciples supernaturally. And as long as we consciously maintain the determined purpose to be His disciples, we can be sure that we are not disciples. Jesus says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you ..." (John 15:16). That is the way the grace of God begins. It is a constraint we can never escape; we can disobey it, but we can never start it or produce it ourselves. We are drawn to God by a work of His supernatural grace, and we can never trace back to find where the work began. Our Lord's making of a disciple is supernatural. He does not build on any natural capacity of ours at all. God does not ask us to do the things that are naturally easy for us—He only asks us to do the things that we are perfectly fit to do through His grace, and that is where the cross we must bear will always come."

It is vital to stay in His Word daily. Luther loved God's Word and out of Psalm 46, he wrote the hymn, 'A Mighty Fortress.' The 46th Psalm begins, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear... The essence of the hymn is just that. We can count on God. We don't have live lives of fear. Fear supports bitterness, anger, dislike and squeezes the joy out of life. Jesus points us in the way of love, joy, and peace.

May God bless you with that spirit of love that seeks the lost to introduce them to the grace you have experienced and which Martin Luther experienced so many years ago that resulted in the birthday of the Lutheran church. As the Promise keepers sing: *Grace alone which God supplies, strength alone He will supply. Christ in us our Cornerstone. We will go forth in strength alone.*" Amen