

2015 NL1 Romans 10:5-17  
15-07-12 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ.....Amen.....

I have a pastor friend who is also a potter. The kind of potter who uses a wheel and plops bunches of clay onto it. It's called throwing pots, which I think, sounds like a lot of fun – it can be fun to smash things!!

But really this is just the terminology that refers to the potter's creative process. So when my friend posted on facebook one Sunday afternoon that she had “thrown pots” during her sermon that day, it meant that she had hauled her potter's wheel and clay and drop cloth and everything else involved in setting up, into the sanctuary, arranged it just so, sat down on her stool, and proceeded to create.

And really, that's what goes on with a potter – this creation. They have a vision of where they are heading... when to many of us a lump of clay is a lump of

clay. But the potter sees the potential there and brings beauty where others might not see it. Of course the clay might have a little say in the matter, or rather the whole process will vary from creation to creation, but the potter makes pots.

In this book of Romans, St. Paul is creating a theological pot. He's crafting a masterpiece telling us who God is and what God has done. In this particular section, chapters 9-11, Paul is concerned with crafting the image: that God's word and promise of salvation are good and effective, for all people – including the many Jews who do not believe. God still loves them.

Paul says, “...*it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy.*” (9:16) And also, “*Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use?*”

So when we pick up Paul's argument today, he acknowledges Moses' teaching of righteousness coming from obeying the law..., and sets the stage for

his argument of righteousness that comes from faith. The pot is taking shape on the wheel, and the potter has had his way with the clay. So we learn in this lesson... first and foremost:...

God saves. And it isn't based on a faith that tries to gain heaven on its own or ascribe hell to others who aren't worthy in our eyes – that's the way of Moses and working the law. God saves... those... who call on him. God saves those who confess Jesus as Lord and that God raised him from the dead; we believe and confess and call on God and are saved.

**Because the one who doesn't call on God isn't comforted in the same way....**

**and one who doesn't believe doesn't look for God who is already at work in their life....**

**and one who doesn't confess does not know to cherish salvation because they cannot see the promise that God has already given.....**

**I don't know how many times I have heard someone in crisis say, "I don't know how I would get through this without God. How do people do it?"**

You are saved... because God saves... and has already done it for all creation. God is the same Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him, not primarily because we called...., but because God saves. To not confess Jesus, does not mean that God cannot save.

What God does not honor is the judgment from humans who ask "*who will ascend into heaven, or who will descend into the pit.*" God in **Christ**, died and rose for you and Israel and all people before anyone but a few disciples even knew who Jesus was. And God asks his people to share that good news.....

Because **WE** learned to call on our God who saves because we have heard God's word. Someone told us that Jesus loves us, that God has saved us from ourselves – from striving to prove ourselves righteous by keeping the law of Moses, and someone told us that we can share God's love with everyone. *“How are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?”*

The High School Sunday school class took a couple of years and studied Romans. You can see their short summaries of each chapter of Romans hanging on a poster in room 201 upstairs. For chapter 10 it says, “God saves everybody... through words... so tell them.”

People are hungry to hear God's word today – the word that Jesus loves them. But the most common picture of “Christian” in the public eye is one who lives a moral life, – but all religions say THAT. The culture doesn't really see Jesus as savior if they see him at all, and culture sees Christians as offensively

judgmental... but Paul breaks **that** pot right away in our lesson today and throws it on the shard pile. Still our culture and our neighbors need the LOVE of Jesus for NOW.... and forever. We can encourage them to call on the one who saves. WE know the God who saves – because God is merciful – and we can call on God day and night.

*“All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* This is from Joel in the midst of a plague of locusts which seemed like the end of the world, and into that God says, “Have no fear, I am here.” And when **we** struggle in our day to day living, and when we want direction... and when we want some divine assurance and guidance... and when we call on God, God says, “Let’s get after this together.” And you are saved. God saves us whenever we call – daily.

God saves you from sin and death;

God saves you from living in this world alone.

God gathers you up in his arms.

God gathers you up in the community of faith where people will speak the love of God to you.

The way God has designed things, faith takes at least three – God who saves, the one who has heard and tells about it, and the one who hears it again for the first time. That's what the picture on the bulletin is all about. Faith is built in community. Faith formation happens in community.

A lot has gone in our community and country in the two weeks that we have been away: Supreme Court rulings, shootings in a church, questions of racial injustice and prejudice going all the way to the State level. And family struggles in our own parish. (And let's face it, there are struggles that we face as we gather every week – someone and many someone's in the pews around you are facing

something!) Facebook and the news have been alight with all kinds of thoughts – some helpful... and some not so much.

But as a community of faith as ones who trust Paul's word that "*The word of God is near you, on your lips and in your heart.*" This word of the God who saves is ours to cherish and to share. How do we speak God's salvation into these terrible and excruciating situations?.....

Sometimes it's a direct word of support.

Sometimes it is a posture of defiance and solidarity.

Sometimes it is rolling up our sleeves and helping with the work to be done.

ALWAYS it is with prayer.

ALWAYS it is with the love of God on our lips, and for the concern of our neighbor in our hearts.



ALWAYS we side with justice – so that where one group is hated and marginalized, we stand there. Our own Lord was marginalized how can we not support those who have the persecuted voice? The word of love is on our lips and in our hearts as ones who follow Jesus – this is encouragement to the one who speaks God’s word of love to others, even Jesus didn’t have ALL the Israelites convinced. And the law of Moses certainly didn’t get them **all whipped up into a frenzied lather of faithfulness and righteousness**. Nor the prophets, or the judges, or the priests and synagogues, BUT **GOD SAVES... GOD IS FAITHFUL... AND GOD KEEPS AT IT!** for you and thru you, a lump of clay, sharing the news and hope of the loving and gracious potter, with other lumps of clay.

Amen.....

Children's sermon: there are all kinds of things that I get excited about. And when I'm excited, I like to tell people about it. Like our trip to Disneyland, we rode rides and met characters and saw shows and ate mickey mouse shaped pancakes, it was a lot of fun.

What do you get excited about? What do you like to talk about?

I also like to talk about Jesus. To let people know that Jesus loves them and is with them all the time to give them love, and encouragement, and what else???

The other day at the mall, I was sitting on a bench minding my own business when the cutest, little girl – maybe 4 years old – bounced up to me and said, "I got my ears done! Look!" And the butterfly studs in her ears were a metaphor of the new joy in life that she saw in her new pierced condition!!