**Romans 10:5-17**

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. [6] But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down) [7] or " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). [8] But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); [9] because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. [11] For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [14] But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" [16] But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" [17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

**“Not Just Any Word”**

 Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Having grown up near Lake Michigan, you see some strange phenomenon. One such oddity is the formation of sandbars arising from changing currents. Around here, you just walk out into the water slowly and gradually as things get deeper. However, when the currents are right in a giant body of water like Lake Michigan things are different. I could walk out at times a couple of footballs fields and the water never went above my knees. A wonder to experience, but there is a great danger that comes with it. Those sandbars that form can just a quickly shift. They leave you not only over your head, but very far from shore.

 In a similar way, a sandbar rose up with the church and Christians for a time being able to walk out very far into our western society. As you already know, that sandbar has shifted. Feeding the 5,000 has turned to being like those disciples in the boat beaten by waves today against marriage, sexuality, and family. However, Jesus walking on water proves He is God, which means He brings all hopefulness. Christian hope is not the same as simply being optimistic. Optimism figures things will somehow work out for the better with enough time. Evolution preached as a religion has fueled such an unrealistic outlook on life. Yet, Christian cannot buy into such an illusion. Lifting up comes from the hope that Jesus is Lord who hears our cries for help.

1. **Let downs drag us into hopelessness.**
2. Who will ascend into heaven?
* Striving to work our way up to God is not what He expects or wants because that would depend on our doing.
* Those Christians in Rome were adrift among unbelieving gentiles doing much to reach up to the heavens to be like the gods.
* Yet, the righteousness of the Law was also not going to bring Christ down because He comes only to save sinners!
* Our problem remains the same to act as if Christ is at a distance and we have to climb up to Him with comfort worked by our hands.
1. Who will descend into the abyss?
* Striving to manage all the sad and dark things of life that come in various ways and times bring grave disappoint.
* God in a whirlwind told Job who had doubts about his sufferings said, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?”
* Those Christians in Rome saw sin, death, and the Devil spoil and stain life in the worst ways that challenged Christ’s victory over the cross.
* Desperation brings spiritual hype wanting to connect to the dead, looking to live with sin rather than forgive it, and letting despair be the air we breathe.
1. Who will face our utter helplessness?
* St. Paul summed up how without a better promise from God humanity is sunk saying, “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"
* “Obeyed the Gospel” is a bad translation and should be “listening in faith to the Gospel” to not harden hearts to receive what God accomplishes for us.
* This should remind us of the 3rd commandment whereby we do not despise preaching and God’s Word but gladly hear and learn it.
* Peter learned the hard way on the water and so do we from our helplessness, but crying out to Christ is for the sake to hear the Gospel.

1. **Lifting up comes from hopefulness in the Lord Jesus.**
2. The Word of faith is Christ for you!
* It was never about walking on water but as St. Paul says, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)…’
* The only way we were made alive is from how God first spoke and continues to speak His promise of righteousness for sinners.
* Since the Word became flesh, Jesus is the Lord who by His saving Word enters our hearts and arises to put His victory over death into our mouths.
* There is unity in what the heart believes and the mouth confesses just as the disciples after being saved worshiped Jesus confessing, "Truly you are the Son of God."
1. The Word of faith is also Christ for all!
* “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.”
* None excluded, none so distant, none forgotten for Christ died making no distinction for His sacrifice is sufficient for all generations and peoples.
* The riches bestowed is that righteousness of faith be it for greedy Zacchaeus up in a tree or a grieving widow that is all alone.
* To call upon Christ means none need be so desperate to live with sin, rather than hear forgiveness. None needs to connect with the dead for the baptized are connected to Christ. None needs to breathe in despair when God speaks for our salvation.
1. The Word of faith is then Christ proclaimed!
* To call upon, believe, and hear is from God reaching out and Christ chooses to do this through His Church.
* St. Paul said, “And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"
* The Word of Jesus made an Ethiopian Eunuch speak beautifully back in his country, drove the woman at the well to invite others in her own way, and even led women at the tomb to revive fearful disciples.
* God seeks the Word of Christ to be proclaimed whether publicly from pastors or privately in the lives of His own people so it can be heard, believed, and confessed.

 As we draw closer to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. There was plenty of shifting going on that made people cry out. It some ways, it turned out to be more optimistic than hopeful in Christ. Our Lutheran Fathers had a name for this delusion stating, “We call people enthusiasts who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit without the preaching of God’s Word” (Formula 478, 13). These words take us back to the fact of what St. Paul says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” As the sandbar shifts today, Jesus still engages us to receive Him for all comfort. What the heart believes the mouth will confess so others too might hear and believe. Lifting up comes from the hope that Jesus is Lord who hears our cries for help. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.