

This is the Day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. **This is God’s Word for God’s people.**

Dear recipients of God’s message,

Did you know that the newspaper occasionally lists the outcome of court cases? Many times this consists of traffic infractions and the fines paid, other tickets, divorce cases, and anything requiring an action of the court. The paper reports this because it is a matter of public record. None of us wants our name reported but occasionally we get caught speeding or whatever it might be and our name ends up in the paper. That’s part of being declared guilty.

When we sin we are also guilty because we are breaking the Law – God’s law – what if all of our sins were reported in the paper? The things we most want to hide, listed for everyone to see. That might be the worst punishment of all – we would probably want to hide in shame – never leave our house because the guilt would be too much to bear. God doesn’t want us to bear that guilt. That is why he comes to us through the Gospel to declare us “not guilty.” The best part is that the Gospel is a gift from our God – a gift He wants everyone to have because everyone needs the comfort that comes through the Gospel message. But God has also given us, his people, a challenge. A challenge to share this Gospel message with everyone.

I. Everyone needs salvation. In Psalm 51 David points out, **“Surely I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”** (Psalm 51:5). As soon as we were conceived God gave us a soul and our parents gave us a sinful nature. David’s son Solomon said, **“There is not a righteous [person] on earth who does what is right and never sins.”** (Ec. 7:20). The Apostle Paul tells us the result of this sinfulness, **“The wages of sin is death.”** (Romans 6:23). Not a very comforting message but unfortunately it is a true message and so we need help! Even if we don’t realize it, we still need help.

Have you ever asked someone, “What’s going to happen to you when you die?” That’s a question I always ask when I am visiting a person with a terminal illness. You might think that’s a silly question to ask, especially if the person has been a member of the church all their life, but the response I get isn’t always the one you might expect. People have told me, “I’m going to heaven because I’ve lived a good life,” or “I’ve tried hard to be a good Christian,” or “I hope I will go to heaven but I just don’t know.” These are people who have heard God’s Word but the influence of the world has created uncertainty in them. What’s going to happen to us when we die is a question we will all have to face some day but you can be certain of the answer because Paul tells us, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**

Jesus provides our salvation and that's a good thing because we cannot do anything to save ourselves. Our situation is hopeless. We need help and God provides the help that we need through his Son Jesus. When Jesus was hanging on the cross he was suffering for your sins – every one of them and when he said, **“It is finished,”** the price for your sins and mine was paid in full. Thus the words of Jesus declare you forgiven. And that forgiveness comes to you through faith which the Holy Spirit plants in your heart. That is a message we want to hear daily because try as we might, every day we fail to measure up to God's Law, but the Gospel assures us that our Savior has stepped in and taken our punishment for us to remove the guilt of our sins.

Just imagine if your kidneys quit working. Your body still has to process everything it takes in but you can't get rid of the bad stuff because that's the job of the kidneys. If you don't find a way to remove those toxins from your body you are going to die. When we sin, we bring toxins into our soul and we need to remove those toxins or our soul will die. God's forgiveness is like receiving dialysis. It takes care of the sin that would cause us harm and eventually death. Just as people on dialysis have a port inserted into their bodies so that their blood can flow through the dialysis machine so we have faith implanted into our hearts to bring us the cleansing forgiveness of Jesus' blood.

That is God's plan of salvation – the only plan of salvation that can bring us comfort, the forgiveness of sins, and the sure hope of eternal life. People have all kinds of ideas about how to get to heaven but God's Word assures us he that believes and is baptized will have eternal life. You will go to heaven because of your faith in Jesus, your Savior. That is the only way – to call on the name of the Lord – to point to Jesus and what he has done for you. That is the great message of the gospel that we have, but God also challenges us to help get the message out so that others will know Jesus as their Savior.

II. Paul now asks us a number of rhetorical questions emphasize God's challenge to you to share this gospel message. **“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?” They can't. “And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?” They can't. “And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” They can't. “And how can they preach unless they are sent?” They can't.** Paul puts these questions in the reverse order of progression to emphasize that preachers are called by God through the congregation and sent out to declare the Gospel message. As they preach, people hear. As people hear the Holy Spirit works to create faith. Once faith is created then the person is able to call on the name of the Lord for salvation. They can now see their Savior through the eyes of faith.

It all starts with the person who brings the message. That's why Paul writes, **“How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”** They bring something that will make the difference between life and death. A lot of people think that sharing the gospel is only the preacher's job, but you have also been called to share the gospel message.

That might seem like an impossible task but look at who Jesus called in our Gospel lesson – simple fishermen. They didn't have any formal training – no college education – no seminary training. Their only training was to sit at the feet of Jesus and that's something you do every week. You come and sit at the feet of Jesus as you listen to his words and sing his praises. You

have everything you need. You are well equipped. You may not have all the answers but you can always do what Philip did with Nathaniel – issue an invitation to, **“Come and see.”**

Not everyone will embrace the message. We know the Jews rejected Jesus and his message but God just wants us to be faithful in spreading the message and he will take care of the rest. Paul sums this section up with one simple sentence, **“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”**

The message is a personal message meant for everyone. That is how the Holy Spirit works – through the message contained in God’s Word. Set a goal for yourself to share that message with someone this week. To bring this message to someone personally so that they can have the same comfort that you have in knowing and trusting in Jesus as your Savior.

You have God’s grace because you have heard the Message. You know Jesus. He went to the cross for you – the same cross that condemns you for your sins also brings you salvation. That is the Gospel message – the message that is for everyone. May God give you the strength and the opportunities to gladly share this gospel message – the joy of your salvation. Amen.