

Lent 2010 – We Preach Christ Crucified

"Peace with God, through Our Lord Jesus Christ"

Text: Romans 5:1-11

*Christ, the Life of all the living, Christ, the Death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving to the darkest depths of woe,
Through Thy sufferings, death and merit I eternal life inherit:
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee. Amen.*
(TLH 151)

The theme for our meditations this Lenten season is **"We Preach Christ Crucified."** The danger in stating that we have determined to know nothing but ***"Jesus Christ, and him crucified,"*** is that we leave others with the impression that we consider ourselves to be deprived or cheated, as though we believe that we are somehow missing out. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This evening we will therefore examine one of the priceless benefits of "Christ crucified" that is ours as we contemplate our "peace with God." The text that will form the basis for our meditation is found in Paul's Inspired Letter to the Romans, the Fifth Chapter:

Romans 5:1-11 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. ⁶ ¶ For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

These are the verbally inspired words of our God. Humbly imploring our God to once again bless us through the study of these words, so we pray, ***"Sanctify us through your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."*** Amen.

Fellow Christians:

Ever stop to consider the task that confronted Satan when he first sinned? First he tried to rebel against his omnipotent Creator. Doesn't take much thought to recognize that that wasn't going to meet with much success. In fact the only viable explanation as to why Satan would even attempt such a thing is that he was absolutely blinded by his own naked ambition. After his power-grab predictably failed, Satan turned his malevolent attention toward the destruction of God's perfect creation. If he could not defeat God, then he would seek to "hurt" God by destroying that which he loves. But here too the task was daunting. How does one go about introducing sin into the perfect existence of Adam and Eve? Think about it. Adam and Eve enjoyed *perfection!* What could the devil possibly offer perfect human beings living in a perfect world and existing in perfect harmony and peace with God?

The answer was that he had the daunting task of trying to make perfection seem inadequate. Not an easy sell. What did he do? His only hope was to first *create* an artificial deficiency, and then try to sell the cure to a deficiency that didn't actually exist. You know of course his plan, his solution. The perception of deficiency that he created was the notion that man's situation could be elevated to equality with God, and the means that he sold them to achieve that goal was to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God said don't, but that was just because he didn't want anyone else to have and enjoy what he did. Obviously we know what happened.

The lesson we should have learned from that mistake, however, continues to escape us – day in and day out. We are still being sold the same nonsense. The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh continue to market the snake oil that there is something better out there, something that can be ours if we just compromise in some way; if we would just be willing to forget what God said and to venture out on our own into a brave new world of individual thought and rebellion.

Politicians make their living in much the same way. Hard to get elected if you promise nothing but what the people already have. You have to promise bigger and better, even if that "bigger and better" is absolutely a fabrication and falsehood. Last week, for example, in trying to sell the recently passed health care bill, a prominent United States

politician promised that under the new plan, many employers would see a 3000% decrease in the premiums they pay for health insurance, and could therefore give raises to all of their employees. The reaction of the audience that heard the promise? Mindless applause. Never mind the fact that there is no such thing as a 3000% reduction *in anything*. It is a mathematical impossibility to reduce anything beyond 100% - unless, of course, our government now plans to pay our congregation 30 times what you previously spent on your pastor's health care premiums, in which case they would pay you \$252,000 annually and I'm pretty sure a raise *would* be in order. I'm not holding my breath.

The point here is neither to identify the nonsense we routinely hear from politicians nor the folly of those who actually believe their impossible promises. The point is to remind ourselves that this is the same sort of nonsense that Satan offers to us on a daily basis. His goal, on the one hand, is to downplay and disparage all that Christians have, along with all holy desires, and, on the other hand, to glamorize all that God forbids. In other words, his goal is to make you despise what you have and desire what is sinful. And make no mistake; the devil is very, very good at both. He is, in fact, the consummate salesman – a veritable master of marketing.

Our text for this evening is God's own antidote to the devil's poison. It is God's inspired response to Satan's ridiculous propaganda. Here God the Holy Spirit throws it right back into the devil's face by not only laying out the inestimable value of all that is ours as Christians, but also by refuting the devil's brazen promotion of sin.

Our text begins by highlighting two of the incomparable treasures that are ours as Christians: ***“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** The two gifts mentioned here are, of course, ***“justification”*** and ***“peace with God.”*** The former is actually brought about by the latter. In other words, it was God's justification of sinners that brought about the peace that we now have with our God. It was God's declaration that the debt for all sin has been paid in full by Jesus Christ that has restored our relationship with our God.

How ironic that God had to restore what mankind alone spoiled. Adam and Eve both enjoyed this peace with their God from the moment of their creation. God was their friend. What an unimaginable blessing! No animosity, no strife, no bitterness, no exclusion. Nothing but perfect harmony – right up until they threw it away in favor of the “new and improved world” promised them by the devil.

It is probably necessary that we here first seek to understand what we once possessed before we can understand what we have lost. What Adam and Eve had – what they *should have* passed down to all future generations – was a blissful contentment the likes of which we cannot now fully appreciate. God saw them, heard them, cared for them - personally. In this blissful state of holiness, our first ancestors knew nothing of shame because nothing in their existence was shameful. Even their very nakedness was sinless and pure. They literally had nothing whatsoever to hide. There was no such thing as pretense or hypocrisy. No greed, no strife, no frustration, no conflict of any kind, no lust, no coveting, no dissatisfaction or envy. Above all, there was a perfect oneness and harmony with God himself. Sin ended all of that – destroyed it utterly – all because Satan succeeded in creating dissatisfaction in Adam and Eve. He did this, of course, by persuading them that there was something better out there.

Understand the incredibly wicked brilliance of what the devil accomplished here. Not only did he succeed in persuading mankind to throw away all that was truly good, he now uses that very same tactic to make sure that mankind never leaves the path of unbelief that leads to eternal destruction. How so? By ridiculing the very same claim on the part of our Savior and the Christian faith.

The basic message of the Christian faith is that there is something better out there. It offers exactly what we read in our text for this evening: ***“peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** The devil's minions work tirelessly to convince mankind that we already have such peace with God. Failing that, their message is that such peace can and must be earned through our own actions. Here's how it works. A man is troubled by his conscience. The law written on his heart by his God tells him that his actions are displeasing to God, so he seeks some advice as to how to rectify the situation and quiet his conscience. The advice he gets from the world is that the real problem is that his conscience is outdated and wrong. That which troubles him only troubles him because of an old-fashioned, obsolete view of morality. In other words, the counsel is to ignore conscience and simply pretend that all is well – that he actually *does* have peace with his God, no matter what his heart and mind are telling him.

As much as they would like this to work, it fails to settle the hearts of *most* human beings. It's really only a very perverted minority that actually believe that sin is no longer sin. The majority remain deeply troubled. Christianity, of course, offers the only solution that works – *genuine* peace with God through the forgiveness that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ. Satan obviously rages against such truth simply

because he knows it to be true. He knows that those who die believing in Jesus Christ as the one who earned their forgiveness will be lost to him, and he desperately wants every single human soul to suffer in hell with him for all eternity. His solution is to promote spiritual self-help programs. Christians know them as “work-righteousness.” If someone remains unconvinced that stealing, cheating, lying, adultery, homosexuality, and all the others are no longer sins, the devil’s solution is for that person to perform just enough social goodness until he has convinced himself that he has made up for his evil. This is something akin to imagining that if you hold the door open for a little old lady before you enter a convenience store, it pretty much makes up for the fact that you then follow her in and rob the place.

The incredibly good news here is that, at least as far as you here this evening are concerned, Satan plan has failed. You do indeed have peace with God. Real, genuine harmony right this moment exists between you and the very One who will judge you on the Last Day. The sentence that rightly should have been pronounced upon you was instead carried out by Jesus Christ – removing your sin and guilt forever. This is exactly what had been causing strife and hostility between you and your God. In fact it was the *only thing* that had prevented peace with God. Listen again to the clear proclamation of our text: **“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”** Having removed that sin barrier, you again have what our text describes as **“access by faith into this grace in which we stand,”** and that new access to God causes us to **“rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

The message here is both incontrovertible and astounding. When **“we preach Christ crucified,”** far from being deprived or lacking any good thing we actually have as our personal possession the absolute best of both worlds. In this world we have the divine comfort and assurance that we are at peace with our God – which also means that he will never forsake us, his children. It means that he will never withhold one single thing that promotes our spiritual wellbeing. And that’s just the here and now. It gets nothing but better. In the world to come this faith will no longer be necessary, since it will give way to the personal experience of an eternal existence with our God. “Faith” is being sure of what we cannot prove. Faith will therefore not exist in heaven, since we will see with our own eyes the glory that our human minds cannot now even begin to comprehend.

Christ crucified means peace with God. Possess peace with God, and you can lack nothing. Amen.

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Mid-Week Lenten Services - 2010

The Opening Hymn *(As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)*

Invocation

Pastor: *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Congregation: *(Spoken) Amen.*

Confession and Absolution

P: *Acknowledging that we stand in the presence of our Holy God, in true repentance and humility we confess our sins to our Lord in the words of the 38th Psalm:*

Psalm 38 *(Supplement page 39)*

P: *Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. According to His authority, and by His command, I announce to you the unalterable decree of our God that all of your sins are forgiven, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All: *(Singing from p.19 of the Supplement) The Agnus Dei "Lamb of God"*

**O Lamb of God, O Christ our Lord, Whose blood, once shed,
true life restored, impart Your Joy, our faith increase.
Sustain with Your mercy and grant us Your peace.**

The Reading of the Passion History

The Apostolic Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy Christian Church
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Sermon Hymn *(As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)*

The Sermon – *The theme for our devotions this Lenten Season is*

"We Preach Christ Crucified"

(Please turn to the back page for this evening's service details)

The Response – *(Hymn #390 "Drawn to the Cross")*

The Offering – *(TLH Hymn #179)*

**On my heart imprint Thine image,
Blessed Jesus, King of Grace
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
Have no pow'r Thee to efface.
This the superscription be:
"Jesus, crucified for me,
is my Life, my hope's Foundation,
and my Glory and Salvation."**

The Prayer of the Day

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

P: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God the Father,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

C: Amen, Amen, Amen. *(Sung by all)*

The Closing Hymn *(As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)*

Silent Prayer

Announcements

[All are invited to remain for fellowship and light refreshments.]

Weekly Hymn and Meditation Schedule

February 17

Hymns: 325, 149,
159

Lenten Theme:
"We Preach
Christ Crucified"

*"Justified by Grace
Alone through
Faith Alone"*

Text: Rom 3:21-26

Pastor Eric Libby

February 24

Hymns: 140,
158, 154

Lenten Theme:
"We Preach
Christ Crucified"

*"The Foolish
Wisdom of the
Cross"*

Text: 1 Cor 1:18-25

Pastor Michael Roehl

March 3

Hymns: 141, 172
(1,2 & 4), 156

Lenten Theme:
"We Preach Christ
Crucified"

*"The Reason to
Endure"*

Text: Heb 12:1-3

Pastor Eric Libby

March 10

Hymns: 155, 721
151 (1, 6-7)

Lenten Theme:
"We Preach
Christ Crucified"

*"More Precious
than Life"*

Text: Phil 3:7-10

Pastor Michael Roehl

March 17

Hymns: 158, 377
(1, 7-9), 145

Lenten Theme:
"We Preach
Christ Crucified"

*"No Longer Dead
but Alive"*

Text: Col 2:13-15

Pastor Eric Libby

March 24

Hymns: 166, 421
171 (1, 3-7)

Lenten Theme:
"We Preach Christ
Crucified"

*"Peace with God
Through Our Lord
Jesus Christ"*

Text: Rom 5:1-11

Pastor Michael Roehl

-Please return this bulletin to the Entry Table for use next week-