

# "What Do You See?"

Text: Romans 10:1-13

May the God of all grace allow you to see the truth in all things, through Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, what we see in the mirror is typically very different than what we see when we look at our neighbor. Obviously we're not talking about physical appearance but judgment and standards.

A few days ago, I was driving west on the Interstate and someone made a U-turn from the east-bound lane a couple hundred yards in front of me. Needless to say, I was indignant. *"That's illegal! Were's a trooper when you need one?"* As I passed the guy, fully prepared to give him the old stink eye, two things occurred to me. First, that I had done the same thing a month or so earlier when I encountered an unexpected bridge closure. Second, he was driving a tow truck and, as an emergency vehicle, what he did was probably not illegal. Still, somehow, he was in the wrong and I clearly was not.

Though God's Word tells us that ***"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"*** (Romans 3:23) and that ***"all must stand before the judgment seat of God"*** (Romans 14:10), we tend to hold our neighbor to a much different standard than we hold ourselves. We also tend to judge others much more harshly than we judge ourselves, and we condemn them much more readily. In other words, we are infinitely more charitable with ourselves than we are with our neighbor. Most of you can probably recall a time when you also resoundingly condemned someone else for virtually the same infraction of which you were guilty. When we break rules it's understandable, negligible, excusable, and therefore forgivable. When someone else breaks the same rule, he's a knob-head and there is no excuse.

This is part of what we will explore this morning under the general theme: *"What do you see?"* In other words, what do you see when you look at yourself? What do you see when you look at your neighbor?

The text that will serve as our guide is found in Paul's Letter to the Romans, the 10<sup>th</sup> Chapter:

**ESV Romans 10:1-13 *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them (the Jews) is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to***

***knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. <sup>5</sup> ¶ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup> 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); <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."***

This is the Word of God – a precious, life-giving, heirloom treasure preserved for us down through the centuries by our benevolent Creator. That you and I might still today gain the blessing that our God would make our own through the study of these sacred words – *that we would see what we are supposed to there see* - so we pray: ***"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."*** Amen.

Every now and then we hear someone recommending that those with problems should *"look inside for the answers."* While I'm not really sure what that is supposed to mean in every case, I'm afraid I do know what it means to the vast majority of those who use that expression. To them it means that truth is relative, and that whatever you find when you search your own heart must be both good and right. Even more than that, they mean that what you discover "within yourself" represents your own personal "truth."

While you and I know this to be mostly just foolishness, the whole idea of "looking inside" brings up an interesting question: *Just what is a Christian supposed to find when he "looks inside"?* In other words, when one who trusts Jesus and his righteousness for his salvation looks inside, when he looks intently into his own heart, what is he supposed to discover?

Certainly any honest and careful inspection will reveal sin, for sin truly and obviously taints our every thought, word, and action. God's Word tells us that **"the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."** Sin will always be a part of us, but is that it? Is that all we are supposed to find when we "look inside"? Shouldn't we also find other stuff – good stuff – when we take a thoroughly honest internal inventory? Shouldn't we also find, for example, things like faith in Jesus Christ and fruits of that faith?

Alarm bells should sound in our ears any time we wander into the area of introspection and self-analysis. Lots of bad things can happen if we aren't careful here. The greatest danger is that we can come to doubt our very faith if we look inside and find deficiencies and failures. Satan loves to create doubt and despair when you come face-to-face with your own natural sin and depravity. He wants you to doubt your very salvation if you find that you are not passionate enough, not as joyful as you ought to be, or not as excited and eager as you feel you should be. He seduces you into imagining that if you happen to lack the sort of zeal that you see in anyone else, then maybe you are really not a true Christian after all.

Satan loves such instability and doubt in God's children because it leaves us susceptible to playing down Christ and to emphasizing instead our own feelings, our own "contributions," our own goodness.

What about you? Have you ever "looked inside" only to be discouraged at the lack of zeal and passion and fruits of faith that you would expect to find there? The fact is things like energy and zeal are really not very reliable indicators of God's opinion of the condition of a human heart. Excitement and enthusiasm say nothing about the rightness of the thing that someone believes. In other words, just because I'm enthusiastic about something doesn't really say anything at all about what I am promoting, other than that I'm sold on it. Some of the most energetic and enthusiastic people you will ever meet are those that promote the most trivial things imaginable – and the most terrible.

Truth, remember, is an *objective* thing. That means that there is a universal standard, and God alone gets to determine what that standard is. God alone determines what does and does not represent reality, since he alone has created and established all things. If a man believes that he must earn his way to heaven (something that every single non-Christian religion teaches) we would fully expect such a man will be zealous and energetic. That zeal and energy are based not on any objective truth, but on the man's own personal convictions - and fears.

Christianity does not find its motivation in selfishness or fear, since we know that *our* salvation has already been won for us by our Savior Jesus. Fear then is never supposed to be the driving force in our lives, since we know that we can add nothing to God's plan for our salvation and therefore stand un-condemned before him because of what Jesus Christ has already accomplished.

The problem that that leaves us with, unfortunately, is that those who believe that they have to earn their salvation are generally more energetic and more zealous than those who realize that their salvation is already secure through faith in God's Son. Fear and greed are powerful motivators, though in the end such things bear no real and lasting fruit.

None of this is, of course, new. Work righteousness has been in existence since the Fall into sin, and those who try to earn their way into heaven have often demonstrated tremendous enthusiasm in the practice of their false and damning religion. The Jews were no exception, and Paul addresses this phenomenon in our text for this morning when he says, **"For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."** The Jews did not lack for enthusiasm; they lacked knowledge. Knowledge of what? Jesus, of course, and his status as the World's only Savior. Their problem was that they chose the only other alternative to Jesus, which is work-righteousness, by whatever name they choose to give it.

That's why when the Jews looked inside, they looked for all the wrong things and were therefore completely fooled by what they found. They found enthusiasm, which gave them the illusion of being right. They found family history, which gave them the illusion of entitlement. They found a reverence for the Law of Moses, which gave them a firm but misguided sense of direction for their lives. The bottom line is that the Jews liked and admired what they saw in themselves, and absolutely *hated* Jesus and his followers for disturbing both their illusion of righteousness and their confidence in their own plan for salvation. Paul put it this way in our text: **"For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God** (which is the gospel of faith) **and seeking to establish their own** (righteousness, by works) **they did not submit to God's righteousness."** Note that their *zeal* or *enthusiasm* did not make them right or wrong. They were condemned by God because of what they believed (or, more accurately, rejected) not because of their lack of goodness or zeal.

The root problem was that they placed their trust in a "righteousness" that they themselves had to provide.

Paul clears all this nonsense away in our text with one magnificent statement of pure gospel: **"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."** To put it another way, where Christ starts, the law stops. Those who look to Christ as the source of their salvation have no need for any other salvation plan – certainly not one where man has to try to provide that which man has *never been able to provide*, which is perfect obedience to God's law. Jesus did that in our place, and he now credits his perfection against our sins, erasing them forever.

Again we return to the idea of looking inside and what Christians should there find when they do so. The Jews hoped to find within themselves the means to achieve heaven. That's what our text referred to as **"the law for righteousness"** – which is exactly what Christ ended. Our text reminds us that we are to look inside only long enough to recognize how thoroughly sinful we are, but then to look *outside* of ourselves for righteousness. Hear this well, for this is critically important. Our hope and confidence cannot be based on that which is within us. Our text further explains by adding this prohibition: **"Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) <sup>7</sup> or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."** Isn't it interesting that our text points to the two things that are uniquely *Christian* and which form the very basis of the Christian faith. No man could ever go up into heaven to bring down the Savior. God himself arranged for that when Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. So also when Jesus was put to death, no man could ever descend into the place of the dead to raise Christ from the dead. God himself did that on Easter Sunday. The point is that God, not man, is the source for man's salvation. These things are therefore not the sort of things we should look for within ourselves. Such things must be provided for us by another, by Jesus the Messiah.

So then what we see when we look in the mirror is a sinner in need of rescue and forgiveness. What is it we see when we look outside of ourselves? Jesus, of course, as the One who provided our sin payment. But that's not all we see. We also see countless souls in need of that same Savior, and that Savior would have us look on them with the same eyes of mercy and love with which we see ourselves – and the same eyes with which our Savior looked on us. In a world of divisiveness and hatred, this has become increasingly challenging. Our society, including the old Adam within us, encourages us to divide the world into sides,

and to show love and compassion to those we see as "on our side," but to reject and despise those who are against us. But what did Paul say in our text about those who hated him so much they wanted him dead? ***Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them (the Jews) is that they may be saved.*** That's how our Savior wants us to see every human being – not as enemies to be crushed and condemned but as souls for whom our Savior also died and who desperately need to come to trust that Savior as also theirs. Of them Paul also wrote to the Philippians, ***"For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction..."***  
ESV(Philippians 3:18-19)

What sobering words: ***"Their end is destruction."*** That's exactly why they need our love now, before it is too late, not our hatred. God help us to look on them with eyes of compassion – to see them all as those in desperate need of the Savior that, by God's grace, we have come to know. Begin each day with eyes that look to that final Day of Judgment, knowing not only the joy of your own righteousness through faith in your Savior Jesus, but also the terrible fate of all who must face their God having died in unbelief. Pray God, each day, that you might look on all that you encounter with compassion, and ask him to open your eyes to every opportunity to share with them the message of forgiveness and life. Amen.

ESV **(Amos 8:4-7)** Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, <sup>5</sup> saying, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances, <sup>6</sup> that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat?" <sup>7</sup> The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds."

ESV **(Luke 16:10-15)** "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. <sup>11</sup> If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? <sup>13</sup> No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." <sup>14</sup> The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

ESV **(Romans 10:1-13)** Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. <sup>2</sup> For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. <sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. <sup>5</sup> ¶ For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup> or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup> 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); <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."



# ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA



**ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
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Michael Roehl, Pastor

**The 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – September 21, 2025**

### **The Opening Prayer by the Pastor**

**The Opening Hymn** – 444 (1, 9-10) *(Blue Hymnal)*  
"Salvation Unto Us Has Come"

**The Order of Service** – Hymnal page 31ff. *(Blue Hymnal)*

**The Scripture Lessons:** *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

**The First Lesson:** (Amos 8:4-7) The religion of the Jews was never intended to be work righteousness. They were always saved by faith in the Promise of a Savior, never by their own deeds. Yet they came to rely on their own works as their entrance to heaven, even though—as the Prophet Amos points out in our first lesson—their own deeds were thoroughly wicked. So also God here warns all who imagine that their wickedness is passing unnoticed that he does, in fact, see exactly what they are doing.

**The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 30** (Hymnal Page 67)

**The Second Lesson:** (Luke 16:10-15) Our Gospel reading follows the Parable of the Shrewd Business Manager, who won the hearts of his master's debtors by reducing their bill once his dishonesty was discovered. Jesus here goes on to teach us that earthly wealth is supposed to be a means to a higher goal, which is always supposed to be kingdom work in his service. The Lord knows what is in the heart, and two separate things cannot rule there. No one can serve both God and material possessions.

### **The Confession of Faith -**

The Apostolic Creed *(Blue Hymnal page 34)*

**The Pre-Sermon Hymn** – 391 (1-2, 5-6) *(Blue Hymnal)*  
"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

**The Sermon** – Text: Romans 10:1-13 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*  
**"What Do You See?"**

**The Offertory** – (Projected on Screens)

**The Post-Sermon Hymn** – 586 *(Blue Hymnal)*  
"Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers"

**The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer**

### **The Benediction**

**The Closing Hymn** – 193 *(Stanzas 1-4) (Blue Hymnal)*  
"Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast"

### **Silent Prayer**

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

**Attendance** – Sunday (30) Average (38)

**This Week at St. Paul:**

<b>Today</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
<b>Mon-Wed</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Board Meetings in Eau Claire
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	<b>-11:15 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour

**CLC News** – Pastor Drew Naumann has accepted the call to Messiah of Eau Claire. Pastor Ben Libby has returned the call to Living Savior of Appleton, WI. Messiah of Eau Claire has called Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer to serve as their third pastor. The CLC Coordinating Council meets this week in Eau Claire.

**CLC Board Meetings** – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to attend the CLC synodical meetings in Eau Claire this week – leaving this afternoon and returning Wednesday evening.

**Midweek Bible Class and Confirmation** – Both midweek Bible Study and Confirmation class are scheduled to resume on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Church Council Notes** – All members of the Church Council were present for the meeting on September 17<sup>th</sup>. At her request, Peggy Lewis and her minor children were released from membership at St Paul. Treasurer Mantz reported that offerings are \$2,800 under budget year-to-date. The Council approved renovation plans for the nursery/cry room. All current church policy statements are being reviewed for relevance and possible revision. The next Council meeting is scheduled for October 26<sup>th</sup> during the fellowship hour.

**Old Cell Phones Needed** – Old Verizon-capable cell phones are needed in the mission field. See Pastor Roehl for details.

**St Paul General Fund Endowment** – A reminder that a General Fund Endowment has been established at St Paul. Contributions to this fund are invested, and the earnings are added to the General Fund annually. That means contributions to the endowment will benefit St Paul indefinitely.