

Theme: **Letting God's Word reform our lives so that we are saved.**

Text: Romans 10: 1 – 21

Season: 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Date: September 24, 2017

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO 80421

Grace and peace to you as you let God's Word reform your lives, from God our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In 37 days, we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the day when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses of debate on the Wittenberg Castle Church door, to bring attention to how the church, at that time, had fallen away from God's Word. In the midst of the Lutheran reformation, our church was named Lutheran and became known as the church that holds onto Scripture Alone as its truth, with salvation by Christ's grace alone, through faith alone. At about this same time Martin Luther wrote the Hymn "A Mighty Fortress is our God." I ask you to open up your hymnal to hymn #656 and look at the words of Martin Luther in this song. Can you see him singing this song with his companions as they rode into the city of Worms in 1521, where the diet of Worms convened and where Martin Luther was asked to recant all that he had written about God's Word and his response was "I cannot and I will not and here I stand." Can you hear the Lutheran German Princes singing this song in 1530 as they go into Augsburg to present their confession of faith, which we call the Augsburg Confession, before Emperor Charles V, knowing that with this confession they could all be beheaded? All of these saints of the past understood the power of God's Word. Why Martin Luther, talks about the devil working in our lives to destroy us and says at the end of the 3rd verse, "***He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.***"

Now please open your hymnals to hymn #578, "Thy Strong Word," which we just sang. This hymn was written in the 1960s by Martin Franzmann, a professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO and the chairman of the Exegetical Theology department. He wrote 'Thy Strong Word,' just like Martin Luther wrote "A mighty Fortress," to encourage us as we face the trials of this world to hold onto the power of God's Word and our faith. Martin Franzmann wasn't facing death but he saw our church battling with the historical criticism movement of the time that was taking us away from the inerrancy of Scripture and he wanted us to hold onto God's Word alone, because God's Word is so great that **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** (Rom. 10:13)

Now I ask you to open your bulletin to our Epistle reading for today, found on page 8. The Apostle Paul says to us, **“Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”** (Rom. 10:1 – 4) You see Martin Luther, Martin Franzmann, the Apostle Paul and each of us have the same problem. We know people who may be really zealous for God but they have established their own righteousness instead of holding onto the righteousness given to us by Christ alone through God's Word alone by Grace Alone. Oh, our hearts desire and our prayers are that they may come to know the truth of God's Word and the righteousness that comes by letting Jesus Christ be our Lord and Savior. That's why it's so important to be in God's Word and let the Holy Spirit work in our lives through God's Word. For the power of God's Word is so great that **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** (Rom. 10:13) Yes, we are still fighting the same battle that Martin Luther and many others fought to keep God's Word alone by Grace alone through Christ alone as the foundation of our faith so that we can be saved. That's why we need the encouragement of the saints of the past and one another regularly in God's Word.

God's Word has two messages for us, the Law and the Gospel, but only the Gospel gives us our salvation. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this as he says, **“For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them.”** (Rom. 10:5) Now I want to know how many of you have kept all of the commandments of God perfectly? The truth is that as we look at God's Word and the law of righteousness and we find that we are condemned to death and are not given life because we have sinned. That's one of the purposes of the Laws of God's Word to show us our sins. Or you could say, God's Word has the power to condemn us.

The sad thing that Martin Luther, Martin Franzmann, the Apostle Paul and hopefully all of us are concerned about is that so often throughout the history of mankind we have made our own righteousness to be a part of the way to our salvation instead of holding onto God's Word Alone that gives us salvation by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ. That's just what the Apostle Paul is talking about as he says, **“⁶But 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.” (Rom. 10:6 – 9)

We are not responsible for making the bridges that get us from earth to heaven or out of hell to our heavenly home, God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has already accomplished that for us. It is as we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives through God’s Word alone that we come to faith in all that God has done for us so that we can travel the pathway to our heavenly home with our Savior. Yes, God’s Word is powerful to bring us to believe and confess our sins so that we can receive the salvation given to us by God’s Grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, **“For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”** (Rom. 10:10) The Law of God show us our sins and our need for a Savior, a living Savior who can prepare and lead us to our heavenly home because we are sinners and lost in the darkness of this world and without the light of God shining in our lives we will not find our way to the heavenly home prepared for us. That’s why Martin Luther wrote his hymn “A Mighty Fortress,” that’s why Martin Franzmann wrote his hymn “Thy Strong Word,” that’s why the Apostle Paul reminds us by saying, **‘For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”’** (Rom. 10:13) Yes, God’s Word is powerful to save all and Martin Luther was thankful for that, especially for all those who had gathered around God’s Word with Him. Yes, we all can be thankful to God for Martin Luther, Martin Franzmann, the Apostle Paul and so many others who held onto God’s Word alone to find God’s Grace to bring them to Faith Along in Jesus Christ. We to can be thankful for all those who hold onto the power of God’s Word but at the same time understand what the Apostle Paul is telling us as he says, **‘How then will they 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!”’** (Rom. 10:14 – 15)

If we truly believe that the power of God's Word is so great that **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved**, then we understand that God's Word is powerful to condemn us, that God's Word is powerful to bring us to believe and confess our faith, that God's Word is powerful to save all and that God's Word is powerful enough to be sent out to all the world. That brings us back to the desire that the Apostle Paul, Martin Luther and Martin Franzmann had to share the power of God's Word with others. I know that you have that desire to share God's Word because I've seen it as you bring your family and friends to come and hear God's Word here with us. I know that you have that heart's desire that the Apostle Paul share with us about his own countrymen and still you may have a fear like Martin Luther had that caused him to write the hymn "A Mighty Fortress," or the fear that the Martin Franzmann had as he wrote "Thy Strong Word." Yes, the Saints of the past are just like you and me, we have a fear that when we talk about God we will make a mistake, we will say the wrong words and that's the same fear that the Romans had, of the Apostle Paul's time, and that's why the Apostle Paul tells us, "**Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**" (Rom. 10:17)

Yes, God's Word is powerful to be sent to All and it starts with us, you and me. God's Word alone brought Faith and the salvation to us by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so let God's Word go to work in your life. For God's Word has the power to save all as we share it in our words and actions. Yes, God's Word has the power if we share it with others.

God's Word Alone, Grace Alone and Faith Alone in Christ is the truth that shines out of the words that the Apostle Paul writes to us today, it's the words that shines out of the hymns of Martin Luther and Martin Franzmann and it's the word that gives us the power to share our faith in Christ, through God's Word and by God's grace with others so that they too can come to know the power of God's Word that enables **everyone who calls on the name of the Lord to be Saved**. Yes, God's Word is powerful to be sent to All the world and it start right here with us. So, share God's Word and let the power of the truth out to do its work in this world. Amen.