

Righteousness Romans 3:19-28      Reformation Sunday Oct. 28, 2018

whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Romans 3:19-22 - Righteousness

Dear friends in Christ, do you ever want to be right? Of course you do, because we all do. As youngsters and their tattling, I'm telling mom, with its unspoken thought "she'll see I know and do the rules better than you." How growing up my sister and I argued about how something the other said was not literally true, how it could be more right. How we fault someone else's speech or dress or conduct, and try to show we could do better. How it still feels good to get a math problem right when I'm helping my kids. We want to be right.

And that is how Paul starts Romans - chapter one talks of the pagans and all the things they do wrong - how they fail to honor God and were given over to their lusts. But chapter 2 starts with those who know the law, the Jews and even us. We use the law to say we do better. We make ourselves master of the law when we use it to cluck at others. And Paul and God call us to account as well. When we proclaim our ways as righteous, he stops our mouths as well as the pagans. For righteousness by the law is out of our reach; by the law is knowledge of sin.

Martin Luther heard God's account; the law showed his sin. He was a monk and devoted his days to study and prayers. And yet Luther confessed his sin at length for hours- about deeds truly but about thoughts and inclinations, about actions not taken.. He wanted God and his law to call him right, yet he saw his many failures. The law spoke loudly not just that all had sinned and fall short but that Luther sinned and fell short. He knew right and wrong, and he was not righteous under the law. And nothing in Luther nor the law would change that. He saw the Gospel as do the law in love, and he knew he had no love in him. That was no Gospel, no good news at all. He despaired.

And we should to when we look into the mirror of the law. There is no righteousness in us to be seen.

God saw Luther's despair and our despair. That there was no difference, that all had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Yet he revealed himself further. He revealed his righteousness in Jesus Christ. Given as a sacrifice. We are made righteous not through our actions, but through God's action. He sent his son. Who fulfilled the law and yet died. And he raised his son up that we too may share in the gift. WE are righteous because in Christ God declares us righteous.

That is the truth of the reformation. That is the righteousness to which the law and the prophets bear witness. That is the righteousness we see in Christ, in whom God is both righteous and the one who makes us righteous. - Just and the justifier.

Lutherans teach 3 uses for the law of God - the curb, the mirror, and the guide (or rule). We talked about the mirror here, that it stops our mouths, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. It

reduces the righteousness we produce to dust and ashes. It removes our excuses that our time or money or talents are too valuable to spend for our neighbor to ashes.

And the Gospel shows the gift. That Christs and talents and life are spent freely that we may be joined to him, that we may become the righteousness of God. Hold on to Christ today. He justifies you and makes you righteous. Hold on to him with the faith God gives - in his word and deeds and sacraments. Hold on with the words and deeds that express your faith.

Christ lives, and he is our righteousness.