

Romans 10:8b-13

“Living in Grace”

February 14, 2016

We live in a world that finds excuses to put other people down. For example: He talks too much. She doesn't talk enough. He is too fat. She is too skinny. They are too huggy. They are too cold and don't hug enough. Their skin is too dark. Their skin is not dark enough. They talk funny. They dress funny. They eat funny. I could go on and on with the differences between us. Enter the gossips and others to take advantage of the differences to make themselves look good and put down others.

Jesus Christ paid for the sins of all not just the chosen few. Jesus Christ opened the doors to heaven and invited all to join Him. We choose to reject Him. We choose to seek our own way to heaven through good works rather than enter through His undeserved grace and mercy found in the Cross at Calvary. We choose to reject Him by living in our sin rather than walk the narrow path that leads to heaven. Yes, Christ chose to open the doors to heaven and we choose to close it by our selfish and self-centered decisions. I include in those selfish and self-centered decisions choosing to reject others because they are different than us.

Listen to the words of our text; **“If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will**

be saved." Faith is more than speaking words that proclaim that you are a Christian or follow Christ. Faith is something that also comes from the heart. I will use another word than heart. Faith is something that also comes from the soul. Lent is time of self-examination. Lent is a time to not only listen to our words, our actions, our thoughts and our desires, but ask our self where they come from. I drove through snow to get my wife from Cleveland. Why? I love her and I want her to continue to be part of my life. We grieve the loss of a loved one. Why? We love them.

You sit in this pew and listen to this preacher on this cold day rather than go to a church which entertains you. Why? I would contend that you seek to hear God's Word rather than be entertained. I would contend that you seek to hear God's Word rather than listen to one of the false teachings that have risen up over the centuries. God is not a woman! Christ is not going to come and reign as a physical king for a thousand years. He is ruling as king right now. We baptize our infants. We receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. I could go on and on with the false teachings that will distance us from God or lead away from God and open again the doors to hell for those who chose to make them the center and focus of their lives rather than Christ Crucified.

Our text goes on to say; "**Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.**" Christ died on the Cross at Calvary. It was a punishment reserved for the

worst of sinners in Roman times. It was a punishment thought sought to shame those who were crucified. They mocked Jesus as part of their attempts to shame Him. He endured it all for us. In this life we too could face the shame given out by the world because we are Christians, but we in the end will never be put to shame because we will experience the glory of heaven. We will be sitting at the wedding banquet as guests and those who shame in this world and refuse to repent will be rejected by our God. Yes, in this life we Christians may endure much, but we have the hope of heaven fulfilled because Christ invited us to join Him in eternity and He paid our way for us to get there.

Sadly we cannot convince the world to understand the simple Gospel message of hope. We gently instruct in the hopes that God will be able to use our words to touch their lives, but we can never argue or scare anyone into heaven. We can be witnesses with our actions, our words and the thoughts and desires that create those actions and words, but we cannot argue or scare anyone into heaven. God's love in Christ calls us, but for many that is not enough because their needs, wants and desires dominate in their lives. In contrast, God wants us to love Him above all things including submitting our needs, wants and desires to Him. In contrast, God wants us to love Him above all things including submitting ourselves to His will even when it goes against our own. Amen.