

Sermon for The Third Sunday after Pentecost

Date: June 30, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: 2 Samuel 11:26 – 12:10, 13-14

Epistle Reading: Galatians 2:15-21; 3:10-14

Gospel Reading: Luke 7:36-8:3

Sermon Text: Galatians 2:15-21; 3:10-14

Sermon Title: Two Kinds of Righteousness

Introit: Psalm 85:8-10,11 Antiphon: Psalm 85:7

Hymns:

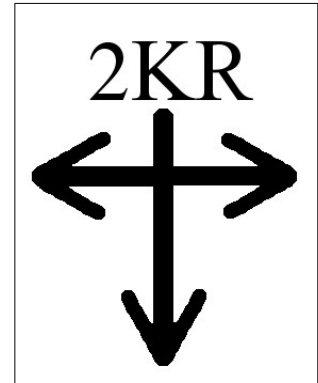
LSB 709 – The King of Love My Shepherd Is

LSB 685 – Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

LSB 712 – Seek Ye First

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151



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Text: Galatians 2:16-21; 3:10-14

We know that people don't receive God's approval by any effort to follow the Law in the Scriptures, but only by believing in Jesus Christ. So we also believed in Jesus Christ in order to receive God's approval by faith in Christ and not by our own efforts. People won't receive God's approval by their own efforts.

If we, the same people who are searching for God's approval in Christ, are still sinners does that mean that Christ serves sinners? That is unthinkable! If I rebuild something that I've torn down, I admit that I was wrong to tear it down. When I tried to obey the Law in the Scriptures those laws killed me. As a result I live in a relationship with God. I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I now live I live by believing in God's Son, who loved me and took the punishment for my sins. I don't reject God's kindness. If we receive God's approval by obeying the laws in the Scriptures, then Christ's death was pointless.

Certainly, there is a curse on all who rely on their own efforts because Scripture says, "The one who does not obey everything that is written in Moses' Teachings is cursed." No one receives God's approval by obeying the laws in Moses' Teachings since, "The person who has God's approval will live by faith." These laws have nothing to do with faith but, "Whoever obeys laws will live because he obeys them."

Christ paid the price to free us from the curse that the Law in Moses' Teachings bring, by becoming cursed instead of us. Scripture says, "Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed." Christ paid the price so that the blessing promised to Abraham would come to all the people of the world through Jesus Christ and we would receive the promised Spirit through faith.

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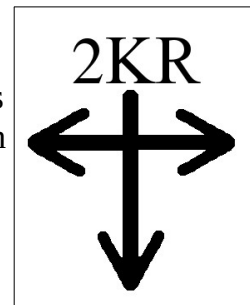
Grace, peace and mercy be yours in the name of Jesus. Amen.

2KR! In a world that now communicates by ‘texting’ we have become a people who abbreviate everything. At the seminary 2KR was a quick way for us pastor types to say “Two Kinds of Righteousness.” The Epistle reading for today is part of what brought Martin Luther to his understanding of the true Gospel message. It is what brought him to the place where he understood that God was not a god of venomous rage, looking to strike each of us down, but rather God is a God looking to pick every one of us up.

To fully understand that, and to fully understand what it means to be a Christian, you must understand 2KR. Without two kinds of righteousness you cannot be a good Christian. This is the key to fully understanding what God offers us and what God expects from us.

Let’s start by defining the word ‘righteousness.’ What does the word righteousness mean? You can imagine that if there are two kinds of righteousness then there may be two different definitions. If you thought that, you get special brownie points today because you are right. If you didn’t think that it’s okay, brownie points won’t help you get into Heaven anyway.

The first kind of righteousness is the Righteousness of God, or “God’s Good Stuff.” It is the good that God give to us us because of His love. It is similar to the righteousness you give to your children. Though they may not always deserve it children receive gifts. Why? Because you love them. You love them so you show that love with gifts. The Righteousness of God is just that, a free gift we do not deserve and did not earn. God gave it to us simply because He wants to.



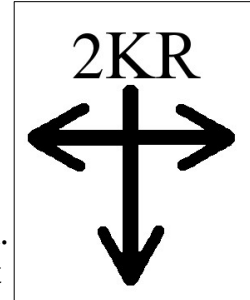
The second kind of righteousness is your righteousness and mine. It is “your good stuff.” You are a righteous person because you do righteous (or good) things. A person is righteous before other people because they provide “good stuff” to others. It is important to remember that “your good stuff” is not the same as “God’s good stuff.” Your righteousness is not the same as God’s righteousness.

Now to our Epistle reading. Paul starts out by saying we are saved not by the obeying Law, or following the Law, not by ticking off every rule as we do what is required. Rather we are saved but by faith in Jesus. This is the key, we are not saved by obeying the Law of God, but the Law must be obeyed. Which sounds like an oxymoron.¹

We do not set the Law of God aside. We are still required to obey it. Every letter of it. Jesus said if you miss one dot on an ‘I’ or one comma, you have broken the entire Law and are forbidden entry into Heaven. For such a little thing you are cut off from the mercy of God and His salvation forever.² The Law is still very much hovering over us, pointing out every misstep we make. Obedience is demanded.

1 A contradiction.
2 Matthew 5:18-20

Look at that picture. You see an arrow that points to the left and the right. It points both ways because the Law of God is for all of us to do for each other. It points out how we should act toward each other. It is not earning anything before God. It is not doing anything for God. The Law was given to teach us how to love our neighbor as our self.³



Here is the confusing part for so many. This is crucial to understand. That righteousness, that is between all of us, is commanded by God, but it does nothing to get you into Heaven. It does nothing to open the Pearly Gates. When you stand before the throne of Almighty God all the good you have done will count for nothing.

James said in his letter that good works are the evidence of your faith, not the cause of faith. We cannot compel people to do these things to make them faithful. Rather the faithful can be seen by what they do. James said faith without works is dead.⁴ If you say you have faith, but that faith does not cause something in you to love your neighbor as yourself, then you have no faith, and no salvation.

That however is not the only kind of righteousness. There is a second kind that is far more important. This is the Righteousness of God, or “God’s Good Stuff.” In the picture you will see that arrow points not up and down, but only down. There is no arrow pointing up because we offer nothing to God that He needs. There is no arrow pointing up because we cannot offer anything that He commands. This kind of righteousness is like those gifts children receive at Christmas time or birthdays.

What does the child do to earn those gifts. If parents are really and bluntly honest they might admit that their children often do far more to earn nothing than any good gift. Still you give them good gifts. The same is true of God. We as His children do not obey the Law. In fact the more we try to obey it, and compel others to obey it, the more we break it. We are stubborn, obstinate, and disobedient. We do what we are told not to do, and don’t do what we are told to do. Saint Paul, who grew up as an expert in the Law, who studied the Law in intricate detail and knew it profoundly well,⁵ complained about this very thing concerning himself.⁶ No matter how hard he tried he constantly failed to be everything he wanted to be for God.⁷ No matter how well you know the Law, or how strict you are in trying to obey it, or compel others to do the same, it is all a futile and sinful effort. It is an effort which cannot ever succeed. So how does God get what He commands? How do we please God?

3 Matthew 22:39

4 James 2:17

5 Acts 22:3

6 Romans 7:15-20

7 Romans 7:14-15

Remember the account of David and Bathsheba. David had slept with the wife of one of his closest friend's.⁸ When it was discovered she was pregnant by him, David had his close friend murdered⁹ and took Bathsheba as his own wife to cover up the sin.¹⁰

Then Nathan the prophet stopped in for a visit and showed David the horror of his sin.¹¹ This is the same David that was called the Apple of God's eye.¹² A man after God's own heart.¹³ How can a man, who has done such a corrupt thing, be given such praise by God? The answer is "Righteousness," but which kind?

Was David righteous in the site of the people and of God with this sin? By no means! David was a detestable sinner by any measure. It was by God's Righteousness that David was forgiven and restored.¹⁴ It was by God's Righteousness that David could be called a man after God's own Heart. What did David do to earn that gift? If you answered 'nothing' you would be right. David did nothing to earn God's love,¹⁵ yet you will see him in Heaven. Why? Because David apologized to God, not because David obeyed the Law.¹⁶ God forgave David the same way He forgives you, when you repent, when you apologize for any and every sin.

That is how we understand righteousness. There are always, and must always be, two different kinds.

There is the Righteousness of God. That one is a challenge to understand or accept when we really look in the mirror and see what God sees. All of that sin, stain and filth, all of that disobedience and disgusting disregard for God, makes us something detestable to ourselves and to God. Yet we are perfect in God's eyes because of God's righteousness. The righteousness that is a product of our faith. Our righteousness is a product of our faith. It is righteousness that causes us to love our neighbor as our self.¹⁷ It is not, and cannot be a producer of faith. It is a result of God's love for us, not our work or obedience.

So is that it? Is everyone saved simply because God loves all people and desires all people to be saved?¹⁸ Does that mean everyone gets to go to Heaven because Jesus died for all people?¹⁹ No. The truth is some people will never know the joy of Heaven.



8 2 Samuel 23:39

9 2 Samuel 11:14-15

10 2 Samuel 11:27

11 2 Samuel 12:7

12 Psalm 17:8

13 Acts 13:22

14 2 Samuel 12:13

15 Psalm 51:16-17

16 Psalm 51:16

17 Leviticus 18:19; Matthew 22:39

18 1 Timothy 2:3-4

19 1 John 2:2

Let me explain. In the Law of God there is a rule that is not so well know. It is not well known because no loving parent could not bear to obey it. Yet there it is in the Law, in Deuteronomy 21.

Parents might have a stubborn and rebellious child who doesn't obey them. Even though they punish him, he still won't listen to them. His father and mother must take him to the leaders of the city at the city gate. They will say to the leaders of the city, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He won't obey us. He eats too much and is a drunk." All the men of the city should stone him to death. You must get rid of this evil. When all Israel hears about it, they will be afraid.²⁰

If a child will not obey parents are to bring that child to court and have them executed. Will you obey the Law of God? Could you? The thought of it is, and should be, too horrible to seriously consider by any loving parent. Yet God gave this command. This is the Law by which He judges us. For the person who will not bend to God, for the one who defies and denies God to the end, on any point has no hope. They are cut off and handed over to be punished.²¹

As pain-filled as any loving parent would feel to do such a thing to their own child, God feels far more.²² He longs desperately to have us home and has provided every means to make that easy for us.²³ Rest on that easy road. Walk the easy path that has been made straight.²⁴

There is only one account of this Law ever being obeyed in the Bible. It was when God the Father handed His own Son over to executed for you, in your place.

For that reason, do not reject the love God has for you. Do not throw away the free gift He has given to you. Live in that freedom and bring it to others.²⁵ Always understanding that you are not earning anything or proving anything. It was already all earned for you. The Law, you could not obey, was obeyed for you so you would not have to.²⁶

Amen.

20 Deuteronomy 21:18-21

21 Matthew 18:34-35

22 Luke 11:11-13

23 Acts 2:38-39

24 Isiah 40:3

25 Matthew 28:19-20

26 Matthew 5:17-ff