

10th Sunday after Pentecost

8/9/20

Tom Baker

Immanuel Lutheran Church 906 E Grant St **Macomb** IL 61453-3322

Immanuel Lutheran Student Center 301 N Clay St Macomb IL 61455

Western Illinois University

Tom & Karen Burtch, President 309-252-2408 H: 309-833-5365

tkburtch@yahoo.com

Cindy Lueck, Office Secretary **309-833-5483**

secretary@ImmanuelMacomb.com

St John Lutheran 424 W Washington St **Rushville** IL 62681

First Lutheran 111 W South St **Mt Sterling** IL 62353

Ron Engelbrecht 217-322-4550

Tim Clark 217-204-6756 timdeb@casscomm.com

For Unbelievers or For Believers?

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The text is Romans 10, verse 9.

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 10:9 ESV)

Who here would disagree that this passage from the apostle Paul is how we are to get an unbeliever saved by having them confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and to believe in their heart that God raised him from the dead?

We begin sermons with a question that either appears to contradict Lutheran theology or is obviously misunderstood and applied by those who have not had theological education. The principle we have used is to make it clear that much of the confusion related to the question is because we often think according to our old Adam rather than think as God does.

So also with this passage. There are many Christians who believe that a person can be saved if they will only invite Christ into their heart, get them to confess that Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead and that will save them. As with almost all of the passages we have examined, the difficulty is caused by a misuse of the distinctions between Law and Gospel.

Is it not obvious that if you use the Law to help someone to be saved that is false teaching? For example, if you say to a friend, "You can be saved if you come to church services regularly and read your Bible often" may be good advice but it is not a way to assure salvation. Many of the Pharisees attended worship often and read the Scriptures yet Jesus said to them in John 8:44: *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.*

Many times the confusion about a passage occurs because the English translation is not clear as is the original Hebrew or Greek. Such is the case with this verse which many interpret as advice as to how to bring an unbeliever into the Church. But that interpretation is based on the assumption that Paul is talking to us about how to convert an unbeliever. The question before us with this passage is whether the apostle is talking about unbelievers or to believers.

That Paul is not talking about getting unbelievers to be saved by getting them to confess that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead is clear from verse 14: "But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed?" Paul is clear that it is impossible for an unbeliever to confess that Jesus is Lord unless they already believe.

That means that a person cannot be saved by us by simply getting them to say a prayer to Jesus which saves them. For if they don't at first believe, their prayer is a sham. And if they do believe, then their prayer is not necessary because Jesus is already in their heart through faith.

So how do we understand this verse? We have seen it cannot be talking about how we save an unbeliever. But how does it apply to you believers? The answer is found in understanding what question Paul is answering. Is he answering the question as to how we save unbelievers? No, because we don't save them by getting them to say a prayer but instead according to Matthew 28 by baptizing them and teaching them all about Jesus.

When we teach adult or youth confirmation you can be assured we will not be teaching them what they are to do or say to become a Lutheran. Instead, on the basis of the Bible and catechesis we will be having them come to an understanding how Lutheran theology is the best summary of how God thinks.

So if Paul is NOT answering questions how to convert unbelievers, what question is he being asked? It's a question each of us may think about at times. How do I know that God recognizes me as a saved person? And the answer is, "Do you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. Then you will be saved."

It is not that your confession is the cause of your salvation. Rather as God thinks, such a confession is the evidence that you truly are saved and that you will inherit heaven and be saved on the Day of Judgment. Unlike the English translation, the original Greek has the word "saved" in the passive which means that it is not taking place because of what you have done but because of what God has done for you in having His Son die to take upon Himself the punishment of your sin and be raised for your justification.

Here is an analogy that clarifies the words of Paul. A parent is asked to speak to a classroom of students which includes two of his children. He says that you will be considered my children if you eat meals in my house, have a bed to sleep in every night, wear clothes I have purchased for you and have either been born or adopted into the family.

Obviously, no one will interpret his words as how to become one of his children. They will instead understand his words as giving evidence to the class as to which of the students are his children.

What difference does this make? Every congregation has delinquents that have not attended worship for months. The message to them will not be a series of laws or rules they must follow but to remind them of the Gospel message of the forgiveness of sins and the robe of righteousness that God has graciously given them.

And in case you need more evidence of the assurance of your salvation besides your confession that Jesus is LORD and He has been raised from the dead, remember the promises connected to your adoption into God's family by baptism and the promises you will hear when you receive the true body and blood of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. For both your confession and those promises are where the evidence is found by God of your having been saved with heaven as your home. Amen.

And may the peace of God that passes all understanding, sustain and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Church Tenth Sunday after Pentecost 9 August 2020

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. *Brief silence*

Almighty God, who laid the foundations of the earth and sets bounds and limits to all things, we give You thanks for Your glorious creation, including the creation of our own bodies and souls. In our sin, we earned for ourselves death and creation itself was subjected to futility, but in Your Son, You have come down to us to grant us forgiveness and new life. Help us to live in righteousness through faith in Him. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, our King, You are the Lord of all peoples, nations and tribes. Grant wisdom and truth to all who rule this land, that they may serve faithfully to promote all that is good and right and to prevent and punish evil. Wherever our courts or laws are unjust and contrary to Your will, reform them for Your mercy's sake. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, when the disciples were frightened, Your Son immediately calmed them with words of His presence. So also aid those who are sick in body or mind, _____ those who suffer trials of faith, and those who grieve. Let their sufferings lead not to doubt, but to the confession that Christ truly is Your Son and that in Him we have salvation and also temporal protection here and abroad. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*Heavenly Father, during today's Voters we request the presence of your Holy Spirit so that both the discussion and the results will be according to your Will. While only You know the future for Immanuel we continue to rely on your promises and blessings that you have bestowed on this congregation from its beginning. Our primary appeal is that of the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, "Thy will be done." Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.***

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**