

Do We Bring Christ?

Proper 14

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Romans 10:5-17

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

This morning, our Epistle text is all about planting seeds. Many of you know what that is about. Many of you use machinery///Our church is surrounded by machinery used///for just such a purpose.

Earlier this summer, we heard how we are to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He might send out laborers into the field. The field is ready; what about the laborers?

God prepares men to be pastors at the Seminaries in Fort Wayne and St. Louis. It is there that He plants the seed in them. “Semination” is the process of sowing a seed; in fact, that is why we call them “Seminaries,” because it is there that the seed is sown.

Yet it is not only at the Seminaries where God’s Word is sown in His men, or His people. It is at every church. So, Luther would ask, where do we find church? “The holy Christian church is to be found where ‘the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered’ (Augsburg Confession VII 1) (Small Catechism with Explanation, p.160).”

Throughout our lives, the process of planting and nurturing the seed of God’s Word takes place. What then are pastors? “Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. (One) planted, (another) watered, but God (gives) the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:5b-7—parenthetical additions my own).”

Turning to our text, though, Paul seems to be coming at this message from a different angle. But as we’ll see, our text is about the planting and continued bringing of God’s Word.

Verse 1

“(T)he righteousness based on faith says, ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?”’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or “Who will descend into the abyss?”’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 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).’”

The false prophets of today, namely those in the charismatic movement, claim that we need to have a “heavenly” or “Godly” experience to know that God is with us. They would make us believe that we must feel that we are having an elevated experience, as though we were in heaven itself to quote-unquote “truly” believe. They ask questions like “When did you come to faith?” They also feel they need to be baptized again if they don’t feel that their first one took.

This is nothing new. In Paul’s day, there were the Gnostics, a group who claimed to have a secret knowledge of God. They claimed that God would never become human or have anything to do with what is physical. For them, the goal was to leave the physical body behind and be only spiritual beings for the rest of eternity. To them, everything physical was corrupt and evil.

But here we have Paul’s assurance as an apostle of God that that is not what God is aiming at. We do not have to have a “heavenly” experience or leave our bodies behind to have God’s Word sown in you. God’s Word is here “near you.” It has been sown here, even in this sinful world. Yes, God Himself took on human flesh to bring us His Word, and, as the Word, He came to die for our sins. It is His Word that Paul and the apostles were taking to the believers of the early church, and it is the same Word which you are hearing today.

Paul knew that the ideas being passed around by the Gnostics were not God's. He and the apostles had God's Word for the world—the message of Jesus as the Savior of the world, and that those who believed could and should be baptized.

Yet the idea of needing a second baptism the way people do it today would never have crossed Paul's mind. There was a difference between that of John the Baptist and the one in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but not from one Trinitarian baptism to another. After all, in the Trinitarian baptism, it is God's Word that is being spoken and being sown. If God didn't say we needed to be baptized again because the first didn't "take", where do people get that idea today? Can't we take God at His Word? His Word that is near us, rather than the words of others which is not God's Word?

Verse 2

“For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

We live in a world of diversity. We have different skin colors, different family structures, and different talents and interests. Yet God is the One who has made us all. He created us to be His creatures and to do His will. Then came the crafty serpent Satan who planted seeds of doubt and sin, and humanity and all of nature fell. Even today, Satan's seeds continue to blossom.

God didn't, and doesn't, just leave it there. He planted His Word in this world after the fall, promising that the seed of the woman Eve would come. That Word, and all the Law and the Promises of salvation, have been passed down, being planted in each new generation.

Now Satan has been defeated, but he still plants his evil lies in our world. For now, God is allowing them both to grow together. But the end of the age is coming. Satan, his lies, and those who follow them, will be weeded out and thrown into the fire which doesn't go out.

Don't listen to Satan and his lies. Don't go after the false prophets who only appear to plant the Word. If you've been listening to the wrong things, repent. Repent and trust the Word which we bring. The Word about how we are sinners by way of Satan's deception and Adam and Eve's sin. The Word about how God didn't leave us there but took on human flesh in His Son, living a perfect life and dying in your place and mine. The Word about how Jesus' death and resurrection has restored our righteousness, our right-ness, with God, and how, because of His sacrificial death, even the very physical creation itself is headed toward restoration.

The faith that is needed to resist Satan, and the same faith which allows us to believe God's Word was not in us when we were born. The Spirit called us to faith when we heard His Word. And His Word is not just for us, it is for all people. Look again at the close of our text.

Verse 3

“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? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?...So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

Hearing is when and how the Word is planted. The Word is carried along by pastors, who received it from their pastors, who received it from their pastors, all the way back to the days of Paul and the apostles.

These men go to the Seminary, having heard the Word and received God's gifts at their home churches. Then at the Seminary, the Word is planted in such a way as to prepare them for delivering it to churches throughout our nation and throughout our world. There they are instructed in depth those same concepts we have just covered: the fall, the Word, the Sacraments and their proper administration, and all other things related to bringing the Word of God about our Savior Jesus Christ.

But not just pastors are involved in this process. All of us in Christ Jesus have been called into His mission to spread His Word. We bring Christ through God's Word. God's Holy Spirit works through you and me in hearing and receiving God's Word, but also in relaying it to others.

This summer, and for the foreseeable future, we pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He would send out laborers into the field. The Word has been planted in us, but we continually need to hear and rehear the Word of God for our edification and instruction. That's what happens with pastors. They go to Seminary to have the Word sown in them by the Seminaries. It's not that they haven't heard the Word before but that each time of hearing it brings them much good. So, too, do we continue in God's Word, that it may be planted in us over and over, that it may bring us much good. And we do it so that we are prepared to plant it in our neighbors when and where we can. We do this for the glory of and out of thanksgiving for all that Jesus has accomplished for us. In Jesus' Name. Amen.