

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 13, 2017

Text: Romans 10:5-17

Theme: "Hear Here!"

I have someone here for you to meet. You remember his cousin, Spudly. Well Spudly moved away, moved to Minnesota. This is his cousin, Sir Terrance Tater. You can probably tell by the derby that Sir Terrance is British. He is all proper and all, but there is this tongue thing going on. I do have another choice (smiley mouth), but it just seems like too much. We can consider the tongue a cooling adaption for now.

Sir Terrance takes us to the theme of the day, "Hear, Here!" Now just from hearing me speak that you can't tell if that's hear with the e-a-r on the end, or with the e-r-e. Your ear can't hear the difference for there is none. It should be with the e-a-r, the expression "Hear, Hear!" is probably of British origin (like Sir Tater), probably originating in Parliament. "Hear him, Hear him," give ear to, listen to the speaker. It was shortened to, "Hear Here!"

You'll notice ours is, "hear here." That is what is going on, so we hope. Our prayer is that hearing here leads to more than hearing alone.

"Hear here, " yes we do. The Word of faith has been proclaimed. It is the word of faith Paul is proclaiming. As we begin our text Paul is contrasting two kinds of righteousness. One is the wrong way, that attempted to be built by the law, one that bypasses Christ as we saw last week. It won't work. It's unreliable no matter how much the effort and

zeal behind the effort. Paul writes in words before our text, “For I bear witness that they have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.” (Romans 10:2-3) Paul then speaks of the right righteousness, “But the 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, bring Christ up from the dead.) But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.’” (Romans 10:6-8a). Then Paul assures them, “That is the word of faith that we proclaim.” (vs 8b).

The message had been heard by the believers in Rome. This is why there were believers. The start of the hearing by those from Rome may well have been on the day of Pentecost hearing from the mouth of Peter that Jesus of Nazareth was Lord and Christ. Those would have spoken the message to others upon their return, and likely other believers arrived from time to time in Rome who spoke the same message. At this point there had been no apostolic mission to Rome that we know of. Paul was wanting to come. The letter to the Romans is part of his preparation. He hoped to come that He might strengthen them and they might encourage him (1:10-11). He also hoped to go on from there to preach the Gospel in Spain (15:24). Perhaps they could help support him in that sending. He wanted to be sent to proclaim the word of Christ to those who had not heard.

We do hear here as the word of faith is proclaimed here. Those sent to proclaim it down through history have done that very thing. The Holy Spirit has worked faith, believers gather as the body of Christ around that Word, and pastors are called and placed to see that the Word continues to be proclaimed accurately. We pastors are called and pledge ourselves to do this very thing. I have a copy of part of my call documents to Pilgrim: “In the name of the Triune God and by His authority we hereby authorize you and obligate you to proclaim to us the Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures, in its truth and purity and as set forth in all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church [and] to administer the holy sacraments in accordance with their divine institution.” It is all so we can hear here. And we do. We hear that Word of Christ which God pours right into our ears. The purpose is not to clean the ear canal. No, it is to enter our mouths and our hearts (vs 8). By the Spirit working in that Word the mouth confesses that Jesus is LORD, and the heart believes that God raised Him from the dead.

We hear here and we do confess. We confess we are sinners and Jesus is Savior. We believe and confess that in Christ there is forgiveness and with that forgiveness life and salvation. In Him we have times of refreshing as we move toward the new heavens and the new earth. But the confession can be met with opposition. Maybe like that extended tongue, “no, not for me,” a response that can even border on contempt.

So, such, being the case we may have a little confession to make about confessing. Now confessing our sins together here may seem pretty

easy, maybe too easy. We can forget what an affront to God is our sin. Do we take it lightly? We go forgiven not to work on filling up our sin bag to bring it back to empty it, but to walk after our Lord, to confess Him before others. We may need to confess that we find confessing sin to be very easy, especially when we are confessing someone else's sin, can't really say enough bad about them, oh, but not to the sinner, to those other *better-than-that-one* folks around me. We may need to confess that we plug our ears to any talk of fault on our part.

No, it is not easy to confess that Jesus is LORD in our culture. We may be tempted to change the message to fit the sensitivities of the ears of this age. So we could take that sharp edge off the law so it doesn't have so much bite to it. We may reason, "who am I to judge?" Really it's God's Word that does the judging. Yes, it may hurt when we take it to heart, and yes, it may not be pleasant to speak to someone, but the call is to speak it in love to bring repentance and healing.

We may also, are also, being tempted to dilute the Gospel a bit. We shy away from speaking of the exclusivity of Christ as though the way of salvation was up for grabs. We may find ourselves getting our tongues and our words all twisted up, speaking out the side of our mouths, in trying to please everyone.

Yes, we confess that we are not always so good at confessing. Which is not good for those who have not heard (nor good for us). How are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe

in Him of whom they have not heard? How are they to hear without someone proclaiming? Not a chance!

We are here to hear. And it is good to come again and again and again. We don't have to ascend up to heaven or crawl down into the abyss to fetch Jesus here. He says where two or three are gathered together in His name He's in the middle of it. We remember He came down from heaven, left the glory that was His from eternity with the Father. He is the Divine. He was there when the foundations of the earth were being laid. He was laying them (Job 38:4). It was no problem for Him to reach His disciples by walking on the water out to the boat (Matthew 14:22-33). This is the Creator who came down to us. He became one of us—human. He faced all the temptations we face, yet never sinned. He knew hunger and thirst, friendship and rejection, happiness and sorrow, gain and loss. He walked perfectly in the way of the Father, not the first hiccup.

And then He did face the abyss for us. He went through hell for us as the Father turned His face against Him at the cross, made Him to be sin who knew no sin. He was crucified, dead and buried. But He has been raised up, lifted up to the Father's right hand. He has sent His apostles to make disciples by baptizing and teaching. He did pour out the Spirit and the Spirit is still being poured out in the waters of baptism.

We come here to hear this message. We can't really hear it too often. You can't hear if you're not here. 'Now wait a minute. I can read and meditate on God's Word.' Yes we can and well we should. But we won't hear it in bed, and we won't hear it in the car, and we won't hear it on the

lake or on the golf course. When we read it on our own, again, as we do well to do, it's not the same as being gathered in Jesus' name. Gathered as His body Jesus is here to speak to us. We rejoice to hear the Word of faith proclaimed by His messengers. We are comforted by the words, "your sins are forgiven," and "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Yes, we hear here and we confess here. We do confess our sins and we do confess that Jesus is Lord. We do that in the creeds. We do that in our hymns. We say it together. We are speaking the same thing. That's what confess means. Not only are we saying the same thing together but we are saying the same thing as the church down through history. We don't change it to accommodate an itching ear. We say it so others might hear.

We just sang:

Lord, here am I: Your fire impart
To this poor cold self-centered soul;
Touch but my lips, my hands, my heart,
And make a world for Christ my goal. (LSB 831, stanza
4)

We speak with tongues not to cut down but to build up. The sharp word of the law may cut to the heart, but the aim is to open up the way for the Word of faith. We confess with our mouths, but we also confess with our lives. Ours are hands to meet needs, the needs of those whom we know like brothers and sisters in Christ, and neighbors and co-workers and family. We confess with our feet, feet not running to temptation, but for

walking after our Lord in the light of His Word. We walk together bearing one another's burden's along the way.

We hear here. The Spirit works faith. We look forward to the goal of faith--salvation. We sing in the Offertory in Divine Service Setting Three, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and uphold me with Thy free Spirit" (from Psalm 51:12) Yes, there is the smile of knowing we have life and salvation in Christ forever and for now. There is joy in seeing the good news go out from those who have heard that more may hear and believe.

Hear, Hear! to hearing here, believing here, confessing here, but not just here, beyond. For Jesus' sake. Amen