

August 21, 2022

John 3:17 to Romans 8:1

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”
(Psalm 118:24)

In the midst of all that is going on in our lives and in the world around us are the fields ripe for harvest?

This morning every one of us in this sanctuary is in one or the other of our verses!

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (John 3:17-18)

Or

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
(Romans 8:1)

Those in Christ Jesus are new creations (Romans 5:17) If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead we are saved, we are a new creation.” (Romans 10:9)

So, what is our role in another person’s faith journey from John 3 to Romans 8? Paul asks you and me, “How are those condemned going to call on a Jesus who they have not believed? (Romans 1:14)

People without Jesus say “I must see it to believe it”. God says believe and see. Those who believe say “because I believe I see.”

How does all this happen? How did it happen to you and to me? It came by the word. How will others hear the word unless someone proclaims Jesus the Christ. (Romans 10:14-17)

How thrilled would you be if you knew your words or prayers opened someone to faith in Jesus? That would be worth every effort because “Who the Son sets free, is free indeed.

Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans unbelieving people (those in John 3) are without excuse for there are three things proclaiming God’s existence: nature, our conscience (sense of right and wrong) and the word of God all of which are under attack today: there is an effort to silence their message.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. (Romans 1:18-23)

It is science that presents the natural world.

Today when science does awesome things that show us a creator there is direct attack on the idea of science; be it the Webb telescope, vaccines or a young girl.

Science demonstrates there is a creator.

The Webb telescope is in orbit 1 million miles from earth. A lightyear equals about 7 trillion miles. With the Webb telescope we now see a galaxy 13.5 billion light years away (94 trillion miles). That far away galaxy is 3.4 light years across with a billion stars. We are in the Milkyway Galaxy which is 100,000 light years across with 200 billion stars. This should awaken curiosity about a creator.

What is the influence of Webb on Christians? Paul refers to nature as proof of God's existence. Science confirms faith. We may debunk science but science proves God's existence. When we deny or destroy the truth of science do we destroy its testimony that God exists?

And now we hear there is a resurgence of polio in three countries: America, England and Israel. As kids we were kept out of swimming pools because of polio. A vaccine by Dr. Salk was a gift and all good gifts come from God. It was a gift but now we hear voices say no to the vaccines and the disease rises up. People are being robbed of vaccine's positive message.

Climate change! A young girl named Geta 'the climate change girl' is attacked for her bold message. Wouldn't it be awesome if there were young Christians as committed to spreading the Good News? Or how about us? Old Christians can spread Good News.

How do we help those who know things are not right? We can share that what they feel is God speaking to them.

“When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on

the day when, according to the gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.” (Romans 2:14-16)

Do we oppose teaching about racism because it makes our kids feel sad or guilty? How will they take instruction about sin? We mute the power of their conscience to lead them to seek God.

The third proof of God’s presence is the Bible: The Word of God. This is the book we should be intimately familiar with. People who are in John 3 will not be familiar with it. It is a very human reaction to belittle or deny it is God’s word otherwise a person would have to admit the God of the Bible is real.

So, what does all this say to us this morning?

To start with we “must believe God is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.” Are you the person who will, either by sharing or prayer, awaken others to God’s presence? (Hebrews 11:6)

A man I know works with others and on occasion they gather and ask him to close their meeting with a prayer. He always ended the prayer “in Jesus' name”. Recently he was told to not say Jesus as it offended someone. For us ending a prayer in Jesus’ name is the only way to end a prayer. Why? Because Jesus said so, it honors God and there is power in the name. Speak Jesus.

We are only about 5 months short of 100 years ago when there was a Depression and we heard “We have nothing to fear but fear itself”. There is fear and fear mongering today. Our answer is God’s perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4:8)

We are warned do not be a people that honors God with our lips whose hearts are far from God; in vain do they worship me God says, teaching human precepts as doctrines.” (Matthew 15:8)

Always remember it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles. (Matthew 15:11)

We must not ‘timestamp’ people by their behavior, where they are today or have been, because we might not be inclined to share the good news, i.e., they are unworthy. We must approach them as God does. It is God’s will that none would perish for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Never give up on someone! (Hebrews 10:31)

If we are to be used by God, we must study to show ourselves approved and be ready with an answer for those who ask us of the hope we have. (Timothy 2:15)

For me there are three steps to Bible study. Read the verse: do you understand what the text says? If so, do you believe it is true? And third, if true, how do you apply it to your life? If we do this, we can share what we have lived. We can share our faith journeys.

If the fields are ripe for harvest why is God calling us? He calls us because “We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

There is nothing to fear because we can approach the throne of grace boldly and ask for grace to be ready. (Hebrews 4:16) We are to live by faith (Romans 1:7) and humble ourselves and God will lift us up. (James 4:6) We can do this because God is with us.

Remember, once we were not a people, but now we are God’s people; once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

And we have God’s word which is sharper than a two-edged sword which is living and active. (Hebrews 4:12)

Who do you say Jesus is? (Matthew 16:15-17) People in John 3 will ask you who He is? Be ready with an answer.

Do you bring Good News that is forever, Good News that will not change with the next news cycle?

Are people calling out for a way through all this today? We are the only ones to be able to help because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6)

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31) And if you are in Romans 8:1, remember whose you are. ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?’ (1 Peter 4:18)

We are responsible for our thoughts, words and actions. We must follow no man but Christ and him alone

What is the will of God for other people? God’s will is that none would perish. Jesus already took their sin we don’t have to clean them up. James writes that God’s mercy triumphs over judgement. We should be the same: merciful rather than judgmental.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to

himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

We must remember the Lord has called us out of darkness in to his marvelous light and we are to bring that light to others. (1 Peter 2:9) Jesus is the light of the world and that light overcomes the darkness. (John 1:5)

We need to remind ourselves again God has chosen us to tell others that perfect love casts out fear and that it is God's will that none would perish (1 John 1:5, Peter 3:9, Romans 10:14-17)

Our message for those in John 3 to get to Romans 8 is confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Jesus from the dead and you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

If we are people of the "way" and Jesus is the way, the truth and the life then let us speak with the wisdom from above which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

How do we do this? In our hearts sanctify the hope in us with gentleness and reverence. (2 pet 3:25)

Trust in Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding. Trust the Lord and He will direct our paths. He will help us to share Good News. (Proverbs 3:6)

These are dangerous times. We are responsible for our thoughts, words and actions. It makes no difference what others say and do. We are to follow no man but only Christ.

Most Christians who do not invite others, even to church, are afraid of rejection. People are not invited because we are afraid. What are we afraid of? Has our witness been less than exemplary?

Be careful with anger because our anger does not produce God's righteousness. (James 1;20)

Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, rather, repay with a blessing. For those who desire life and desire to see good days keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. (1 Peter 3:9-12)

Are we being too patient? The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

In your heart sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15)

We are to be like Paul who wrote “I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’ (Romans 1:16-17)

Do you feel unsure about your ability to do this? Remember, the disciples asked Jesus to have their faith increased. So can we. (Luke 17:5)

Be ready to help others move from John 3 (condemned) to Romans 8 (born again, no condemnation). Everyone can be born anew by the word. (1 Peter 1:23-25)

Remember, speak Jesus. “Never hide that name. There is nothing more important in the world, the universe or eternity than His name: the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not ashamed of Him; we are not afraid of sharing His love. Loving people is not based upon whether they think like us or not. They will experience Him if we are like Jesus.” (K.P. Kohannan, Gospel for Asia)

Get excited. We are instruments of reconciliation called by God to bring Good News.

Speak Jesus. Pray in Jesus’ name.

How does all this happen? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all our ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

For family, friends, neighbors, and strangers are we open to be used? God’s heart is mercy and salvation. We have Good News. No one has to remain condemned in John 3. Our God loves them far more than we can imagine.

God has chosen to make known the great mystery of Christianity. Christ in you, Christ in me, Christ in them the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

Lord, your Word is life itself. Help us to bring life and light to others. We ask in the name of Jesus.