

## **In The Day Of Salvation**

### **Isaiah 49:8-13**

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

In our Epistle lesson, it speaks about being under the law. It is amazing how many people think that is exactly what Christianity is all about. I have talked about this before, but it happens very regularly. I was sitting at Hardees in Waupaca last week Friday after visiting one of Our shut-in members, enjoying my lunch. A gentleman came up to my table and asked me if I was a pastor. I guess the clerical collar was a dead give-away. Although I did consider saying I was not, but was practicing with my new Halloween costume, I did not do that, but said, “yes, I am.”

He asked if he could sit down and wondered if it was OK to ask me a question.

He thought himself rather knowledgeable about Christianity, even claiming to have read the entire Bible more than once. There was only one problem, albeit a huge problem; he was stuck in the Law. He didn't understand the Gospel whatsoever. In fact, no matter what I said, nor how I explained Christianity, I could not lead him to understanding.

He had an absolute hatred for the God of Christianity, for he understood Christianity only according to the Law. His understanding of Christianity was a perversion; it had nothing to do with Christ crucified - giving His life to redeem sinners. He was stuck in the do's the don'ts and the punishment which God will meet out upon the impenitent. He equated impenitence with imperfection. He saw Jesus as a moral guide and teacher of righteousness, and refused to understand anything about Christ crucified as Redeemer and Savior. And there was no amount of explaining that was going to change his mind.

What is truly scary, are the number of those who claim to be Christians who are in the same situation. They are of the belief that they will gain eternal life and a place in heaven by how well they follow the do's and don'ts of God's Law. They see coming to church as their work. This is the time that they're given their life instructions, and it is outside these doors that they follow those instructions, fixing their lives, and earning God's grace. Jesus is their guide and compass, but nothing more.

It is true, Christianity does involve the Law. You are to live according to the Law. But it doesn't end there. Christianity has to do with Christ and His perfect life, His innocent suffering and death. Christianity is the forgiveness and salvation He won for those who would trust in Him.

Dear friends, you have come into God's house today for what purpose? If you came to be told how to live, then here is the word for you, “be perfect.” Be perfect in your thoughts as well as your deeds.

That is where people have problems, they do not want to let God have the final answer. Many want to make their own rules. What Christianity says are God's rules are unreasonable, and those who demand that those rules are the sole truth, are unloving since they do not allow me to believe what I want to believe.

Many Christians want an attainable Law, so that they can earn their way into heaven. To do this they water down God's Law. But notice, it is still about what we do for God – you could say this understanding is still about the law.

But as Christians, we don't stop simply with the Law. It is true, you and I are to be obedient to God's Law. But as Christians, the Law now serves a greater purpose than simply telling us what to do and what not to do.

As Christians, the Law serves the purpose of pointing out to us our sins. It shows us how helpless we are. As our Epistle lesson says, the Law enslaves us; it shows us that we cannot get out of our slavery to sin on our own. It shows us that if left on our own, we would suffer God's wrath and eternal displeasure.

Simply put, the Law shows us our desperate need for help – our desperate need for a Savior.

For true Christians, the Law elicits the response, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." (Ps. 51:1-3)

"I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32:5)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12)

And how does God respond to our plea for mercy? What does God say to those who acknowledge their wretched sinfulness? Even before we know to ask the question, He gives His Son!

Do you understand what that means? God's law shows us how imperfect we are, how disobedient to God we are in our thoughts, words, and deeds. It proclaims to us what we deserve from Him.

God also knows our helplessness to save ourselves, so He sent His Son to accomplish what we fail to accomplish. He lived without sin. Oh, he was tempted as we are in every way, so He knows what temptations we endure – but without sin.

Our Old Testament lesson speaks about hearing our plea for mercy, and the Lord answering, "In the time of favor I have answered you; in the day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people."

These words were spoken before Christ took on human flesh - when He was the Word of God without human flesh – the pre-incarnate Word. God is talking about the time of Favor. That time was almost 2000 years ago now, but it was the right time, it was the fullness of time, it was the day of salvation. It was Christ's accomplishing salvation for us with his innocent suffering and death, and the victory being proclaimed boldly on Easter morning when His tomb was found empty.

Today is also the day of salvation in which God helps us. Baptized into Christ, every day is the day of salvation we live in – our daily contrition and repentance – where we trust not in ourselves but in Christ's work to redeem us and bless us with life. This is not based upon what we have done, or ever could do in regard to the keeping of the Law, but our daily life lived in the forgiveness of sins – daily lived trusting in the forgiveness that is our through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As those in the world, and all false Christians see Christianity as the Law, we see beyond that. We see the Law as driving us to our knees, driving us to look for the day of salvation. Today is the day of salvation! The forgiveness Christ purchased has been proclaimed into your ears, and by that Word, your sins are forgiven! That forgiveness He purchased is preached into your ears even now. And in the hearing and believing of that word, you are saved.

In a moment, that Old Testament lesson will be fulfilled even further, for on the table before you is God's Christ. Remember the words the Lord spoke about His Christ, His Messiah, His anointed one? "In the time of favor I have answered you; in the day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a

covenant to the people.” Today is your day of salvation. Christ is here as the new covenant promised some twenty-seven hundred years ago in the prophet Isaiah.

Christ is here and it is your day of salvation, the Lord does help you. He forgives your sins, frees you from the consequences of them, and feeds and nourishes you for your new life – your holy life – your life lived in Christ, to life everlasting.

Today is the day of salvation. Today the Lord comes to comfort you, His people, and in coming to you, has compassion on you. In Christ, you are blessed in the Lord, by God’ grace, to be His children. Amen.