

In Your Heart And Mouth
Romans 10:8-13

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

Today we Celebrate St. Andrew, apostle. It is the first of our Advent services where we will consider different saints of the church. From our Gospel, we learn that he was brother of Simon Peter and had been a disciple of John the baptizer. He followed Jesus and was one of the 12 disciples. It is good that we remember his faithfulness as an apostle, one of those sent to proclaim Christ.

He brought the Gospel to many places, it is recorded that he brought the Gospel to portions of Russia. Ultimately he died by crucifixion, at his request on a cross shaped like an "X", as he felt he was not worthy to die on a cross in the same manner as his Lord & Savior, Jesus. Today, many churches now bear his name, including a good number of Lutheran ones.

Do you know any people who say, "I don't need to go to church to be a Christian! It is simply between God and me, as long as I believe it in my heart, that's all that matters." Is this true? In today's text, we hear God's Word tell us that the word of faith is not only in the heart, but also in the mouth. Paul records God's Word on the matter this way: *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, 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.*

As you believe, so will you confess. While it is true that faith is, first of all, a conviction of the heart that Jesus Christ is Savior. It is also true that such faith will and must produce a confession with the mouth, what is believed in the heart.

Let us look at some things. If I have no desire to be in God's house, am I truly a believer? If I have no hunger and thirst for the precious gifts of salvation, is there faith in my heart? If I am unwilling to defend what I believe when others ridicule the truths of the Christian faith, do I truly believe them?

God told the Israelites, way back in Moses' day, *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart."* It cannot be in one place and not the other. If it is indeed upon your heart, it will indeed proceed from your mouth.

Oh yes, there are hypocrites. Those who say it is in their hearts, but it never is confessed with their lips. There are other hypocrites too, they claim it with their lips, but their hearts are far from God.

To be honest, there are days that you and I may be one or the other. We like to confess it with the lips. We like to point fingers at others, what sinners they are. We can accuse our spouse of sin so easily, in the heat of an argument, we find it so easy to remind them of all the evil darkness they have committed in word and deed. But the Gospel, the forgiveness of Christ Jesus is surely far from our heart at that time.

At other times, we like to think of ourselves as good Christians because we go through the motions - we appear to be confessing it with the lips. We come to church on a somewhat regular basis. We sing the hymns. We pray the prayers. But, our hearts are never in it. We might easily be described by the very words of Jesus, as nothing more than white-washed tombs. We look good on the outside, but on the inside, we're full of dead men's bones.

Other times, we privately think we have faith. But, we've defined our own faith. It has little or nothing to do with what God declares to be true in the Scriptures. We think we can do our own thing - whatever that might be. We think we don't need to gather with others and confess our faith with our mouths. And when others speak ill of the truths of the faith handed down for generations, we either keep our mouths shut or nod in agreement with their foolishness.

Dear friends in Christ, "*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.*" The divine Word placed God's law in the mouth and the heart, just as He proclaimed to the Israelites as recorded in Deuteronomy (30:14). The Law of God is written on all hearts, and it is confessed by all mouths. Who would argue that murder isn't a bad thing? Same thing with stealing. And while not everybody has faith in Christ Jesus, there is nobody who doesn't believe in something outside themselves, all have an innate knowledge of some higher being.

Dearly beloved of God, so it is true of the Gospel, "*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.*" *That is, the word of faith that we proclaim.* It is in your heart as faith. It is in your mouth as your confession. The two always go together. True faith is never silent, it always speaks out. As Paul writes, *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*

Did you notice the order? Faith justifies and the mouth confesses. Paul wrote earlier in this book, *if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.* (Rom. 4:2-5 ESV)

Abraham believed, his faith was counted to him as righteousness. Andrew believed and then confessed, "We have found the Messiah, or Christ."

So it is with you, *For with the heart one believes and is justified.* Faith makes as its own, that which it trusts. The Christian trusts the works of Christ, His death and resurrection, not his own life and works, for these the Christian sees as sinful, and confessing them as sin, casts them away and trusts Christ's work. Christ's death and resurrection then become the possession of the believer - by faith, they justify him.

You are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. You were given faith, not by your own works, but by the work of God in Christ Jesus. The Word of faith, that Christ has accomplished salvation for you and delivers it to you in Word and Sacrament, is proclaimed to you.

It also says, *and with the mouth one confesses and is saved*. Confession is the principal work of faith. Confession denies the self and lays hold upon Christ. Here is where baptism lives in your daily life, for you deny yourself and trust God.

When you confess your sinfulness, you die to Christ - you put yourself to death. And in Christ, you are made alive - given a new life in Christ Jesus. This is an action of the heart coming forth from the mouth.

Yes, our text says, *"Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; 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."* Some might claim that those are "conditional clauses" — "everyone who believes" gets this, and "everyone who calls" gets that. Do not read too much into the grammar of this text. Do not forget that these are more descriptive phrases than prescriptive.

What that means is this. They do not *prescribe* what souls must do in order to cause salvation. Instead, they *describe* what happens when God has brought faith into your souls. Do you see the difference? In all these thoughts about heart and mouth, you must find comfort in this statement, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." Andrew confesses a very simple, rudimentary faith, "We have found the Messiah, God's Christ." You and I also find comfort in the same fact, it is but simple faith that saves, for belief in Christ will not be put to shame.

He who has promised this to us does not lie. Speaking to us as simple-minded lambs, the Lord Jesus promises, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10.29).

It is very simple. *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.* There is the means by which God has reconciled the world to Himself in the blood of His own Son. Christ's death and resurrection are the gracious events of God's grace by which He earns, for you, forgiveness and eternal life.

In delivering that Word of reconciliation to you, salvation is yours. Baptism, the proclaimed Word of Christ, and the Lord's Supper are the means by which the Gospel comes to you and builds faith into your hearts. If God's word is not preached and His Sacraments are not delivered, then people are not saved. Without these, people cannot receive into their souls the grace and power of God that causes faith.

Yes, salvation is linked to faith, and that belief and trust is linked to the preaching of the Gospel and the delivery of the sacraments. Thanks be to God, for it is He who makes both things to happen in our midst and we are not ashamed. He sent forth Andrew, His apostle – His "sent out one" – to proclaim Christ. He still sends out those who boldly proclaim Christ. And, as you have heard this message, you also are sent out to believe in your heart, and boldly confess with your mouth, Jesus Christ as Lord. Amen.