

"Beautiful Feet" (Romans 10:5–17)(5.3.20)

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

What to preach? What to preach?

Maybe Sunday, Maybe Monday.

I wonder what to preach?

Holy Spirit, guide me I pray.

While I was figuring this out, I thought I would take care of some routine things while I waited for inspiration. Daily devotionals will sometimes point me in the right direction. A little cleaning up and then some housekeeping. Okay, now I will answer some emails. After that, I do some Bible study preparation. Hmm, still no word for me. OK, time for my Monday lunch.

While eating lunch, it struck me. You know when that happens, it is like the V8 commercials, with the forehead slap. The answer to my preaching direction was in an email exchange. A person I know sent it late one night.

The subject line was "delusion." Where does the delusion come from that if a person didn't explain Christ to me that I would never know or understand?

Who told this person to behave this way? Christ, if he is THE CHRIST, will reveal himself to everyone, without anyone's help. Why do people feel the need to fly all over the world to speak about the Christ? It is a delusion.

Why in the course of a normal conversation does a much younger person feel the need to slip in the "Christ thing?" I have lived a rich full life; and, experienced a lot of things. How insulting. How could they think I don't already know about Jesus? I have had my ups and downs, experienced grief and jubilation. What nerve?

I was protected the whole time. Saved. Jesus presented himself to me and this kid was nowhere in sight. How do put them in their place and make them shut up?

Here's what you guys don't understand. Jesus doesn't need your help. Remember that He is All powerful. Praise him. That's up to you. But nothing all powerful needs anyone's help.

And they closed with a nice salutation. Here is my response.

These are serious questions that deserve a lengthy discussion and cannot be adequately answered by this email. I will very briefly answer what I can. One crucial issue in answering these questions is how one understands the authority of the Bible. Because I believe it is the word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and inerrant, this determines my answers.

No doubt, some people do get direct revelation of Jesus in dreams and visions and possibly actual appearances. There are reports of people coming to Jesus because of these happenings in Muslim countries that are not otherwise exposed to Jesus. This is not the "norm" though.

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:14-15 New Living Translation (NLT)

14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? 15 And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

Certainly God is omnipotent and doesn't need human agents. At the same time, the historical biblical record demonstrates that is how the Lord chooses to work. For example, God didn't need Moses but used Moses.

Jesus' parting words before his ascension: Matthew 28:18–20 (NIV84)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

So, Jesus commands us to share the good news.

Finally, there is a difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord. I am not saying you don't know Jesus. I am just saying there is a difference.

I pray that you found this helpful.

That is how the Holy Spirit guided me to our scripture for today:

Romans 10:5-17 (NIV84)

5 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." 6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

16 But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" 17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: "Beautiful Feet"

BODY:

In these strange times, we have become a people celebrating those in the delivery business. We are learning to distinguish between the sounds of different trucks: FEDEX, UPS, or the US Postal Service. We can even get our meals and groceries delivered.

In our house it is not only Carol and I that are waiting for deliveries. Our dog, Zacchaeus, had been signed up for this package deal where every three weeks or so, a box would be delivered for him. It might have food for him. But, the fun boxes had treats and toys. No matter who comes to the door he gets excited; but, he gets especially excited if they are carrying boxes.

Here is some evidence. You can see him jumping up and down and barking. From the outside, it looks even funnier. He has big floppy ears for such a little dog and when he jumps that high, they spring up like Dumbo the Elephant, and look like wings. Normally, that brings a large smile to the delivery person's face. Zacchaeus certainly thinks that their feet are beautiful as they bring him glad tidings and good news.

Every Christian is compelled by Christ to share the glad tidings and good news. We are to have beautiful feet. Now, my actual feet are not much to look at; but, my spiritual feet get exhilarated in the blissful beauty of sharing the gospel. The gospel is the Good News. Jesus is the gospel. Jesus is the Good News. In our scripture, Paul contrasts the righteousness that is by the law and the righteousness that is by faith. This is a critical issue because to be righteous is to be "right with God." If we are not right with God, then

we are condemned. Yes, Jesus is our life-ring, the means of our salvation. These are Jesus' words in John 3:17-18 (NIV84)

17 "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." So, verse 17 is the positive proclamation, but verse 18 is the corollary. 18 "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

It is important that we define our terms. We already defined the gospel as the good news of Jesus.

What is Belief, Believing? It is conviction based on testimony that something is true or that someone is reliable. As used in the Bible, to believe in God involves the element of trust, not mere acknowledgment of his existence. (Paul also uses the related words of faith and trust.)

In John 10:7 (NIV84) Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep." It is not a perfect metaphor, but think of belief, of faith, as the hinge to the gate. Our salvation, our righteousness is what connects us to the gate that is Jesus, the Son of God. Without that hinge, that belief, the gate does not swing open.

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Yes, it is that simple; and, its simplicity is what makes it so hard for some people to accept. Others only get it half right. They wear their faith only on their lips while their hearts are unchanged. There is something in our human nature that wants to contribute to our salvation. Surely there must be some strings attached to this free gift.

Paul makes a stark contrast between the supposed difficulty and the reality of our reconciliation with God. We had no part in sending Emmanuel, Jesus, down from heaven. We had no part in the resurrection of Jesus from death and the abyss. On the other hand, the miracle of eternal life is immediately accessible. The Holy Spirit is already working in peoples' lives. The seed of faith has been placed within them by prevenient grace. Paul says, "The saving word is completely accessible for it is already in your mouth and in your heart." We only need to release what the LORD has already fashioned for us.

Last week, you heard me share Jesus' words that only relatively few will be saved. Here is the great shame in that truth. Salvation is available to ALL! Anyone who trusts in him. There is no difference: all people groups are included. The same Lord is Lord of ALL. And, God richly blesses ALL who call on him.

EVERYONE who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Anyone, All, Everyone: Paul is making it crystal clear, "Every person on earth is to be sought out to receive the gospel."

What is PREACHING? To preach is to proclaim, to announce, to declare a word from God, to present publicly the good news, to deliver a religious discourse related directly or indirectly to a text of Scripture. Apart from a specific context, preaching is difficult to define. Even though preaching has long been significantly linked to the life and activity of both Jewish and Christian communities, it is so varied in content, mode, audience, and purpose that it resists the constraints of a dictionary, even a Bible dictionary.

Some people want to disqualify themselves from their preconceived idea of what makes a preacher.

Before I became a preacher, and partly because of it, I took a lay speaker class. There was a woman in the class from a small poor church. It was obvious to me that her education was lacking and I thought it to be a handicap for her. Part of the class was to prepare a short sermon and preach it before your classmates.

When this woman preached, I was quickly humbled. There was no doubt that she knew the Lord Jesus in the way that I wanted to know the Lord Jesus. She had firsthand knowledge that she shared simply and most powerfully. Not through any eloquence or fancy way of presentation, her experience of Christ

superseded any pretty words a poet or preacher could proffer.

The way a Christian lives should proclaim Jesus. Our acts of charity and mercy should proclaim Jesus. By living sacrificially for others, we proclaim Jesus. By teaching our children, we proclaim Jesus. In our business dealings, our honesty, integrity, and forthrightness, proclaim Jesus. In our gathering together in fellowship, we proclaim Jesus.

You know the old saying that actions speak louder than words; but, I say to you that we need both elements to proclaim Jesus. Let your lives SPEAK volumes about the Lord Jesus. Are we Christians not a nation of priests? Are we not ministers of reconciliation?

In verses 14 & 15, Paul lays out the process of justification by faith through a series of questions. We are to be the beautiful feet that bring the good news. We are sent. Jesus told his disciples the night he was arrested. As the Father sent me, I send you. And, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that we are to be like a city on a hill. No one lights a candle and puts it under a bushel basket. As there is all kinds of proclaiming, there is all kinds of sending. Without preaching or proclaiming, people will not be able to hear.

What is the message that must be heard? It is about the person of Jesus. He is the one in whom they must believe. Jesus is the one upon whom they must call. For everyone who calls on the name of the LORD WILL be saved.

The written word is certainly instrumental to bring people to the Lord Jesus. Here at Emmaus, we have given away hundreds and hundreds of Bibles; Pocket Testaments; Lifebooks; and gospel tracts. One 4th of July Parade, we gave away 1,000 million dollar bills that had the gospel on the back.

But there is something about hearing God's gospel proclaimed. I read many sermons every week. Some are even from books like The World's Greatest Sermons. When I finish reading them, I scratch my head and wonder what made them great. It happens through the testimony, through the witness, through the personality of the one sharing. God the Holy Spirit works in the speaker and in the hearer.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. And He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

The Law of Moses requires complete adherence to all of God's laws. If we break one, the Bible tells us, we break them all. We cannot keep the whole of the law for even a day; so, it is utterly impossible to do it for a lifetime. The parents of the human race, Adam and Eve, could not even obey one commandment. Do we think we are any better? We must know that without Jesus, there is no hope for the abundant life here and now. We must know that without Jesus, we cannot be righteous before our heavenly Father.

Charles Spurgeon and others have told a story about a man he called Jack the Huckster. He was a traveling con man who was unsavory in every way. One time he heard a woman singing,

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;

But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

The tune and that verse stuck in his mind. It was what the Germans call an "ear worm." He just couldn't get it out of his head. Over and over again it just echoed back and forth within him. He began to sing it. Through this, his heart was changed and he became a follower of Jesus.

Because of his terrible reputation, people kept questioning Jack. The pastor questioned Jack. The deacons questioned Jack. The people kept questioning his faith. His answer was always the same:

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;

But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

He never let go of that refrain. Reading that story made me think about the man born blind from the 9th chapter of John. After Jesus healed him, the Jewish leaders kept trying to discredit him and to discredit Jesus. The man kept replying, "I was blind but now I see."

## CONCLUSION:

During our Zoom Bible study this past Tuesday, some of the participants shared how people currently seem more open to God talk. One woman expressed that this COVID-19 pandemic has quieted the world so that we can hear the voice of Jesus, who said, "My sheep hear my voice." The time is ripe my friends. May we prepared to speak of the reason for our hope.

Yes, our God is all powerful and yet He deems to use lowly human beings to be His instruments. He used Moses, a murderer who stammered. He used Paul a persecutor of Christians who described himself as the worst among sinners. The Lord uses the faithful mother reading Bible stories to her children. God uses the stalwart father who leads his family in daily devotions.

During this time of quarantine, Carol has been baking chocolate chip cookie bars. She packages a couple of them at a time and then delivers them to friends' homes; hanging them on the front door knob or some other no-contact method. The recipients have really appreciated the kindness. One woman called Carol and left a voicemail, sent her a thank you text, and mailed a thank-you card. Yes, how beautiful are the feet of those that bring good news.

How much more so when they bring the good news of salvation through Jesus the Christ? May you wear your faith as a pedicure. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Amen and amen. Let us pray.