

### *Romans 10:5-17 (NRSV)*

<sup>5</sup>Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.” “But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup>“or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup>But what does it say?

“The word is near you,  
on your lips and in your heart”

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

<sup>11</sup>The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

<sup>14</sup>But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? <sup>15</sup>And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” <sup>16</sup>But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” <sup>17</sup>So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

### *Isaiah 52:7-10 (NRSV)*

<sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,  
who brings good news,  
who announces salvation,  
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

<sup>8</sup>Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,  
together they sing for joy;  
for in plain sight they see  
the return of the LORD to Zion.

<sup>9</sup>Break forth together into singing,  
you ruins of Jerusalem;  
for the LORD has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

*Good News! God has kept his promise. We are rescued!*

*So why are we shy about sharing this Good News with others?*

*Why are we sometimes reluctant to invite friends and family to join us at St. Andrew?*

One of many scenes from *The Lord of the Rings* that stayed with me was the lighting of the signal fires from Gondor to Rohan. It seemed that the city must soon fall, so Gandalf sends Pippin to light the signal fire in Gondor. That fire is seen by the next station on the mountain tops where it is relayed to the next fire and to the next fire ... all the way to King Theoden in Rohan. Will the riders of Rohan arrive in time? Will the city be saved?

The stirring imagery of Isaiah 52:7-10 is much like that movie scene. Though the Jews live in Babylonian exile, their sentinels are posted on the mountaintops. There, they anxiously await a sign of their own rescue, of the Savior's arrival. When they see that the LORD is riding to their rescue, they burst into laughter and song. At last, God has rolled his sleeves and gone to work. The big day has come. Israel is saved. That is Good News, joyful news, bursting-at-the-seams Great News!

And what is this Good News? It wasn't the cavalry riding down the mountainside. No, it was the Good News that God had kept God's promises of rescue. In his letter, Paul uses these Isaiah images to celebrate the Good News incarnate in Jesus Christ. But what does he really mean by Good News?

### Two New Bible Academy Teachers!

Rev. Steve Robertson and Rev. Kathy McLean-Davis will be teaching this fall!

Classes begin the week of Sept 15.  
More information is available at  
[www.thebibleacademy.com](http://www.thebibleacademy.com)

#### *From the Apostles to the Present: A Fast & Furious History of the Christian Faith*

Rev. Steve Robertson  
Wednesday evening

Have you ever wanted to know how the Christian Faith began? How did our doctrines evolve? What were the great heresies that helped shape and define the orthodox beliefs of the early church? If you would like to explore what we believe as Christians and why we believe what we do, join us for this lively survey of our Christian history.

*Desperate Housewives*  
Rev. Kathy McLean-Davis  
Wednesday evening

A women-only study about biblical women who found themselves in desperate circumstances, living in a different world from ours. But there is much we can learn from them: their strength and courage and their relationship with God and Jesus the Christ. The study will cover 3 OT stories and 4 Gospel stories to include: Deborah & Jael; Tamar; Esther; The Woman Who Extended the Lord's Table; The Woman Who Broke the Curse; The Woman Who Hauled Living Water; and The Woman Who Had a Near Death Experience.

### *The Good News*

The Good News (*evangelion* in the Greek, also translated "gospel") is not a summary of Jesus' teachings nor a synopsis of his life nor even the comfort of knowing that Jesus loves us. Granted, all of that is good and much of it is news to many, but it is not what Paul nor the other NT writers meant by "Good News." The Good News is a proclamation to the entire world that Jesus is Lord. It is no more complicated than that and no less profound. It is a public proclamation of something we claim is true.

This world, indeed all of creation, has one Master and that person is Jesus. It is to him and him alone that every knee should bow (see Philippians 2:6-11). This is the Good News that transcends all other news because unless it is so, the world and all its inhabitants are adrift in a cosmos that is still lost. Richard Burridge writes, "Paul says remarkably little about Jesus' ministry, and rarely quotes his teaching. Instead, he see the whole nexus of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as a totality. In the 'Christ Event' God has acted to save men and women – and the whole cosmos. It is the central pivot of the ages."<sup>1</sup>

#### *How are they to hear?*

Despite having the greatest news of all, despite the promise of a restored relationship with God that transcends the troubles and anxieties of our day-to-day lives – despite this Good News, why are so many of us reluctant to invite our friends, family, and neighbors to hear this Good News proclaimed and to see it lived?

I'm not talking about evangelizing, though God calls each of us to that mission.<sup>2</sup> I'm just talking about a simple invitation:

- "We'd love to have you join us this Sunday. Why don't you come with us. We can meet you in the lobby or even pick you up."
- "I'm part of Mom-to-Mom, a wonderful group of young mothers that meets weekly at St. Andrew. How about I pick you up next week? There is even free childcare!"
- "St. Andrew offers the most wonderful weekday and weeknight short-term classes. I've been going for awhile. Why don't you come with me this fall. I promise that you'll be glad you did."

There are some at St. Andrew who are really good at inviting others to join them. And I'm sure there is a long list of reasons that most(?) of us are sometimes reluctant to invite people to St. Andrew. When we hesitate about inviting, we might remember Paul's words: "How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard?" Indeed. September is a natural time to invite friends to St. Andrew. Let's make a renewed commitment to invitation.

<sup>1</sup>from "And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord," in *Exploring and Proclaiming the Apostles' Creed*, Ed. Roger Van Harn, Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.

<sup>2</sup>In 2005, we spent some time with the ideas of Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad for nurturing a passionate church, including an evangelizing approach that focuses on finding "persons of peace." I wrote a background study on this: "How's Your OUT?," Aug. 28, 2005. You can download a copy at [www.thebibleacademy.com](http://www.thebibleacademy.com).

## A Closer Look at Scripture: Romans 10

Almost anywhere you turn in Romans, you are going to find something a bit puzzling or confusing. When the writer of 2 Peter says that there some things in Paul's letters that are "hard to understand" (3:15-16), he was right.

In part, this is because Paul is writing a letter to real people dealing with real issues and we have only one side of the conversation, a bit like listening in on one end of a telephone call. But Paul can also be confusing to us because we just don't know our Old Testament very well. As Paul is stringing together one OT quotation or allusion after another, often weaving them together in bits and pieces, often interpreting them in the light of Christ, we simply have no context for the quote. We can't hear the echoes that Paul's Jewish readers would have heard, nor do we even have much appreciation for Paul's larger themes. Here is a closer look at today's passage.

Today's passage from Romans is part of an extended reflection on Deuteronomy 30. (See what I mean. . . most of us have no clue what is in Deuteronomy 30, but every first-century Jew sure did).

In Deut. 28 and 29, Moses tells the Israelites of the blessings that await them if they keep the law and the consequences if they fail. And he foresees the day when the Israelites' failures will result in their exile. But in Deut. 30, Moses also foresees the day of their return and urges them to choose life now and always. God's people don't have to go anywhere looking for God's word, neither to the heavens nor across the ocean, for "the word is very near to you" (Deut. 30:14).

Paul takes this passage from Deuteronomy and reshapes it around Jesus' incarnation (bringing Christ down, v. 6) and resurrection (bringing Christ up from the dead, v. 7). It isn't the righteousness of the law that saves, but the righteousness that comes from faith in God (v. 5 & 6). In other words, it is trusting that God has put things right through Jesus that marks us out as having been rescued. This is how our relationship with God has been put right—by acknowledging and trusting that, yes, Jesus was truly resurrected by God and, yes, that means Jesus is Lord (v. 9 & 10). Further, this salvation is open to all, to the Jews, who had been given the law, and to the Gentiles, who had not been given the law . . . to everyone (v. 12). Paul then uses a quote from the prophet Joel to drive home his point (v. 13).

Earlier in the letter, Paul had made this point in even more stark terms: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (meaning, "non-Jew") (Rom. 1:16). Quite an assertion: the message of the "Christ event" has saving power. Paul isn't saying that God has the power to save, nor even that the Gospel (the message) is *about* God's saving power. He asserts that the message itself has the capacity to save, but only for those who believe that Paul's assertion is true.<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly then, Paul goes on to state the obvious. How can people call on Jesus unless they trust him? How can they trust him unless they've been told? How can they be told unless there is someone to tell them? How can there be someone to tell them unless someone is sent? (v. 14-15).

Not only is Paul validating his own apostolic mission ("apostle" means "one who is sent"), he is urging us all to appreciate that the proclamation of the Good News is not just important, it is necessary. It is the means by which God calls people into the Church, the body of the saved. "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (v. 17). Sadly, Paul knows that many of his fellow Jews are not responding the Good News that he proclaims. Nonetheless, Paul presses on, eager to share the gospel of Christ with any who would listen.

1. from Leander Keck's commentary on Romans, in the *Abingdon New Testament Commentary Series*, 2005.

## READING WITH HEART & MIND

**Monday, Genesis 6:11-22** God's invitation to Noah.

**Tuesday, Exodus 3** God's invitation to Moses.

**Wednesday, Isaiah 2:2-4** God's invitation to all the nations, written about 700 years before Jesus.

**Thursday, John 1:35-51** Jesus' invitation to Andrew and others. Note what Andrew does after meeting Jesus for the first time!

**Friday, Luke 14:1-24** The invitation and humility; Jesus' parable of the great dinner

**Saturday, Matthew 28:18-20 & Acts 1:8** Jesus sends out his disciples. This is no less true now than it was then.

## Sermon Notes

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### **Fall 2008 Bible Academy registration is now open!!**

**[www.thebibleacademy.com](http://www.thebibleacademy.com)**

We are offering our largest schedule of daytime and evening classes. There is something for everyone this fall and we hope that you'll make plans now to be a part of it.

Classes will begin the week of September 15.

Brochures for the fall session are available around the church and are arriving in homes.

Please register early! It will be a big help.

### ***Our Family Tree: The Stories of the Christian Denominations***

A new series in Scott Engle's 11:00 class on Sunday mornings in Festival Hall.

This has always been a much-requested series and is the first time it has been offered.

**Beginning September 7**

**Please join us!**

### ***Two Trips to the Biblical Lands: Fall 2009!***

In June 2007, Scott & Patti led a St. Andrew group on a life-changing tour of the biblical lands: Israel, Egypt, Ephesus, Athens, Rome and more. They are planning a similar trip in October 2009. As before, it will be built around a 14-day Holland America cruise, during which Scott will lecture at sea.

In addition, Rev. Debbie Lyons and Janet Collinsworth will be leading a second trip in November. It will be a shorter and less costly trip, but will also visit Israel, Egypt, Ephesus, and Greece.

**For more info go to [www.thebibleacademy.com](http://www.thebibleacademy.com)**

**The first information meeting on the trips will be at 7pm on this Tuesday evening, Aug 26, in Piro Hall.**

You can also call Scott at 214-291-8009 or e-mail him at [sengle@thebibleacademy.com](mailto:sengle@thebibleacademy.com)

## **Questions for Discussion and Reflection**

Several years ago, my family and I were able to see a revival of *The Music Man* on Broadway. You may know this story of a redeemed con man. At one point in the story, the townspeople excitedly gather in the main square to await the arrival of the Wells Fargo wagon. What will the wagon bring this time? A gray mackinaw, a bathtub, or a cross-cut saw? Everyone is so excited that the mere sight of the truck is cause for celebration.

Paul uses a metaphor from Isaiah 52 to capture that same excitement over the arrival of the messenger bearing God's Good News. The feet of the messenger are beautiful! What the messenger brings is so wonderful that even her feet are lovely to the eye – like the wheels on that Wells Fargo truck.

Try to imagine the very best news that you could take to your friends and neighbors. Maybe it is a cure for cancer. Or the end of hatred. Maybe money pouring out of the sky . . . or the promise of eternal life. Would you hesitate to invite them to join in this exciting news? Wouldn't you pound on their front door until they answer? Wouldn't you wake them in the night?

Yet, too many of us hesitate when it comes to inviting friends to St. Andrew, whether to worship on Sunday or a weekday class. Why do you think that so many of us hesitate? What makes us hesitant believers? Is it our own lack of excitement? Is it a public world that increasingly insists the messenger keep the news to himself? How could we begin to overcome our hesitancy? How could we help each other in this? How could we all become better inviters?