

## **Lent Day 24**

Tuesday March 28, 2017

### **Reading:** Romans 10:5-21

*9 If you declare 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 profess your faith and are saved.*

### **Reflection**

Too often we confuse the means by which someone becomes a Christian with the gospel. They are not the same thing. The gospel, says Paul, is the message of Jesus' death and resurrection as the means by which God has defeated the power of sin and redeemed his whole creation. That is the gospel whether you or I or anyone else believes it or not. It is the truth at the centre of time and space. It truth isn't contingent on our belief because it is good news not good advice.

How we become Christians is an issue which is an implication of the gospel. We are not automatically saved by God's actions in Christ. There is some theology which claims that. Unfortunately, Scripture is clear that there is action needed on the part of the human individual which then apply the benefits of Christ's work to our lives. In short, this good news is powerful to those who believe.

This is why Paul uses the word 'if' in his argument here. This is not a cold ritual — recite some words and you'll be okay. No, rather, if you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. Remember the deeply political language here in Rome. Caesar was Lord. To call anyone else Lord was to deny Caesar's claim. Paul says anyone who truly gives their allegiance to King Jesus and no other. Then, to believe with our heart, isn't to have an emotional event — no matter how important that was to Wesley — but to know and be changed by it in the very seat of who you are; your whole self. In short, those who give themselves to God's good news are saved.

Saved is another loaded word, meaning to be rescued from the trouble of sin, the threat of God's final wrath and judgment, made a part of God's covenant family, to be restored to the image of God which we were made in the first place and promised life everlasting in the age to come. These words are a confession a new believer would make in baptism, that symbol of our death to self and sin, and resurrection to new life in Christ.

As we journey through lent we need to remember this good news is what we are giving our allegiance to — the person of Jesus. We are not trying to make ourselves good enough for God to accept us. Our confession and repentance is the result of our salvation, not the cause of it.

### **Prayer**

Lord, thank you for this great salvation. Help us to remember that the gospel is Jesus and it's to him we give our whole selves to. As a result we seek to conform our lives to his image. Amen.