

## **Lent Day 8**

Thursday March 9, 2017

### **Reading: Romans 3:9-20**

*For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin...Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.*

### **Reflection**

There's kind of a code that I lived by in my own life, "Everything is legal as long as you don't get caught." As well, there's kind of a code in my new life, "As long as I can justify my action, that is, as long as I can show the logic of how my action is good, I'll be okay." Of course, neither of these codes are codes to live by and if we give it any serious thought we'd know that they wouldn't fly with human authority, why would they fly with God?

But, when we invent such codes we are rationalizing our behaviour because we already know they are out of line with what they should be. The best thing that could happen is that we let go of our rationalizations and come face to face with our sin. These codes play a part in our doing just that.

Paul says that all human beings are under the power of sin. In these words Paul describes the plight of humanity — we are under an alien, hostile Power called Sin. Sin is personified into a malevolent enemy and we are his captives. When we develop our codes and then fail to keep them we see most clearly in those moments that we are in fact held hostage.

Now, we might think that we have some ground to stand before God and say, "It's not my fault! I was held hostage!" But Paul says that another function of the law is to close our mouths. We have no defence. In fact, the whole world — everyone equally, regardless of distinction — is held accountable to God. Two things are true about us: We are under the captivity of Sin and we are responsible before God for our sinfulness.

Where then is the hope? In this passage it's implied; no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law. This is hopeful because the implication is that someone(s) may be declared righteous some other way, other than the law. Paul hasn't kept this a secret, it is by Jesus Christ (yet to be filled out). So, for those who are participating in Lent, don't build a code out of it, like your piety is somehow earning you credit with God — let's be honest we probably learn how far we are from godliness when we practice lent. No, our hope is in Christ and our gratitude is expressed in entering the worship practice of Lent.

### **Prayer**

Law-giver, thank you for revealing to us our sorrowful condition and for overcoming that condition through Christ. What a glorious thought, to be called righteous by God. Help us to practice the rhythms of lent as our response to your grace rather than an attempt to impress you. Amen.