July 3, 2011

Romans 7:15-25

Matthew 11:16-19

“Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!”

You never get a second chance to make a first impression…friends; I have “good-news” and “bad-news.” In seminary I was taught the Billy Graham model of preaching a sermon – give them the bad-news and end with hope found in the good-news.

Friends, the Apostle Paul tells the bad-news to the Romans, that they are hopelessly lost in sin. There is no offering to any Roman god that will appease an angry god, but only faith in the One True God, who sent His Son to the earth to redeem creation back unto God. This One Son is Jesus Christ. Was Paul remembering what he had said in Acts 17:23, “to an unknown god’? ‘What you worship as unknown, I proclaim to you!’ Hey Rome, the whole world is under the influence of sin (bad news) yet God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ to redeem and restore fellowship with God (good news).

From the text, Romans 7:15-25, have you counted the times that Paul uses the first-person, “I”? My ESV records 25x in these 10 verses. I’m guessing that there is an emphasis happening that should be obvious. Yet these are the folks who worshiped “an unknown god.” Paul tells them that the law is not sin or sinful; sin is defined as “missing the mark, it is not hitting the bulls-eye on a target.” God has created each and every person with desire… it is what we do with desire, either to passionately obey and serve God with willing and joyful hearts and lives – or “Frank Sinatra… I did it my way!” What are we to do?! Paul tells the Romans that the answer is found in the living presence of Jesus Christ!

Isn’t it great to know that these Scriptures were applied to and for the people of Paul’s day… right? Our society is soooo far advanced in technology and sophistication that we need not worry or concern ourselves with sin in our midst… right?

Matthew 11 begins with the followers of John the Baptizer coming to Jesus and asking him ‘if he was The One, or should they look for another?’ Jesus calmly answers them by saying, “go and tell… what you see and hear…” Some commentators state that some people may reject Jesus because he… well… he doesn’t conform to the way we’ve always done it before… Jesus just does things different!

We played a flute but you didn’t dance.

John ate and drank with… he must have a demon.

Jesus eats and drinks and therefore is a glutton and drunkard AND a friend of sinners and tax collectors.

Do you know why Peter returned to fishing on the Sea of Galilee after Jesus had been tried, crucified, buried and raised from the dead? HOPE. Max Lucado writes, ‘that Peter returned to the place where he first met Jesus in hope that he would meet him there again!’ In Luke 5, Peter and his partners, James and John, had fished all night and came ashore with no fish to sell and broken nets to mend. A preacher was there and he drew quite a crowd; Jesus of Nazareth. In fact he drew such a crowd that he was nearly being pressed into the Sea of Galilee. Jesus asks Peter if he could use his boat to preach to the people and tell them of the Kingdom of God and the good news of God’s redeeming grace and forgiveness of sin; sounded good to Peter so off into the water they went. After finishing teaching Jesus makes an odd request, “let’s go fishing, put out into the deep waters.” What does “he” know about fishing, we’re “professionals” and we’ve not caught a thing… but Peter agrees and miraculously they catch so many fish that the boat fills and nearly sinks! Peter looks up at Jesus and realizes that he is who he says that he is. Come forward with me now to the week after the crucifixion and resurrection, again we find Peter, James & John on a boat in the Sea of Galilee… fishing. Why, I agree with Max Lacado, not to catch fish, but to find Jesus again! And sure enough, after hauling in empty nets and man from the shore calls out asking, “Have you caught anything?” … immediately they look up and recognize that it is the Lord!

Friends, brothers & sisters, we are NOT immune for the influence of sin… oh the bad I don’t want to do is the thing that I do; and the good that I want to do is not what I do… oh wretched people that we are… who will help us???

THANKS BE TO GOD FOR JESUS CHRIST!

Aren’t you glad that Jesus came eating and drinking with sinners and His redemption has reached across the ages of time to rescue you and me?! When we come for this bread & juice… remember what God in Jesus Christ has done for you – no longer are you a child of destruction, no longer are you a child of sin, no longer are you under the requirement of “we’ve never done it this way before.”

Here… at this table, is where we first met Jesus Christ and it is here again that we come, with hope, knowing that we will find him again!

BLESSED ASSURANCE, JESUS IS MINE! THANKS BE TO GOD FOR JESUS CHRIST… and God’s people say… AMEN!