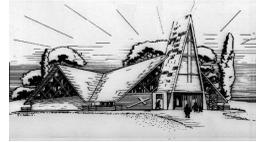




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon - Reformation Sunday 2016

*The Righteousness of God creates a new
Life of Forgiveness and peace!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Rom 3, 19-28:

- **ESV 19** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.
- **20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.
- **21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-
- **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:
- **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
- **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
- **26** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- **27** Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.
- **28** For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.
- **29** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,
- **30** since God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.
- **31** Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that we hear the Law of God, that shuts our mouth, and hear the good news about the righteousness of God given to us. Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

- Trust is a very important thing! If people don't trust each other, life together gets very complicated. Eventually everything will be an issue. The one would have to explain to the other one all the time that he or she was not meaning it in this or that way, that it only seemed like it. Later on they will take offence with the smallest minute issues and blow them up and out of proportion. A constant fighting will be ongoing. Such a break in trust happens because we assume that

the other person will not lie to you.

- While we are young, we easily give our trust to almost everyone. As we grow older, after having experienced some let downs, where we found out, people are not as good as they look, we become more careful, more reserved, because we realise one cannot trust everyone. What we need is some kind of a track record over time to experience for ourselves, OK, this person is not lying all the time!
- Trust is vitally important for any good relationship! Without trust there is no peace. Without trust life will be a constant struggle!
- Now, lets say we would make an experiment, say we would travel around the world searching for a person who doesn't lie at all, who always does what he or she says! How far would we have to travel? What do you think?
- Well, I can spare you the long- long trip, because the Apostle Paul gives us the answer. He quotes from the Psalms and the Prophets of the OT [3,11-18]: *"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."* *"Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive."* *"The venom of asps is under their lips."* *"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."* *"Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known."* *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*
- In verse 4 he summarised and said: *"Let God be true, but every man a liar"*. And so we would have gone around the world and we would have returned here without finding a single person that has never lied!
- And we need to press one notch further, what about ourselves? Can I truly say of myself that I have never lied? Am I not included in those mentioned in the Psalms?
- It is most certainly true, that all people are liars, including me! This is terrible! Psychologists confirm this. They reckon that a normal office worker, who works with the public, is lied to between 10 to 200 times a day! And we know how much being on the receiving end of lying hurts!
- Why do we do this? Basically to cover up evil in us! Often we lie without even noticing! Only when someone rebukes us we realise, oh no, not again! We lie to try and justify ourselves! And then we support this construction of ours with good

looking works! Thus, we try and hide evil with something that at least looks good!

- But God sees what we are doing! It is like a futile and stupid game we play assuming we can hide it from Him. One could actually laugh about it, if it wouldn't cause so much serious damage to God's Creation.

- Dear congregation, Reformation in the Church always starts with repentance, a repentance caused by God's holy Word! The Law of God accuses us in such a way that there is no escape for anyone. Not for the old Adam of Paul, Luther, the pastors or anyone in the church and most certainly not for my old Self.

- And this is very good that there is no escape for evil in us. It needs to come to the light, it needs to be exposed, not kept or hugged any longer as a secret in our inmost chamber. Once it is exposed to the light, it loses its power. It gets crucified.

- And we know the even better news, that those who died like this, through this act of God, God makes alive! Those, who lose their life, find it. Those, who confess that their own righteousness is like a filthy rag and therefore long for the righteousness of Christ receive it as a pure gift. Blessed are the poor in the Spirit! Those who humble themselves are exalted by God.

- Here is the greatness of God's act: He does what He promised, already in the OT Scriptures. God is faithful. No human being is fully trustworthy, but God is! He is absolutely trustworthy. He never lied, never lies and will never lie. There is no darkness in Him. What He promises to do, He does. His Word is not mere sound, but His Word has substance, creates a new reality for us!

- And this new reality has a name, is a person, has a body, namely Christ. Luther made the following statement, based on Christ's own Word spoken after His Resurrection: Take Christ out of the OT Scriptures, what will you have? Answer: a mere foreshadow without substance- Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth- as many falsely claim, a rule book, but the content that saves us, missing! God's Mission to save the world from all false saviours and home made ways of coming into His good book was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus, His suffering and death on our behalf.

- All our ways of trying to save ourselves, to please God, even if we give our very, very best, fall short because if the tree is bad it cannot give good fruits. In

Baptism God planted His new seed in us so that the new tree will grow in us which will give good fruit. He declared us righteous. The new spirit of trust was born in us.

- God invests His trust in us, that is in those who can only fail Him. And yet, He still gives it to us. And whenever we receive it, in this very moment, in our hearing, trust in His promises is created, renewed, strengthened and nourished.
- That is one of the great troubles with us, we don't even realise what we need! We tend to long for all the wrong things. So, God has to guide us and lead us towards the right hunger for His righteousness! And He does this and keeps His promise by giving us forgiveness of sins, His Life and His Salvation.
- And so we come back to the issue of trust being important but found so wanting in the world. In Christ, here as we are gathered in His Body, God Himself becomes the source of trust. Here is the fountain of trust. When we run on empty, here and everywhere where His trust is handed out via His means of Word and Sacraments, we become refreshed, filled with His mercy. As we go into the week we can hand out God's trust, God's mercy to all people around us, especially if they don't deserve it! In this way the thing that is so missing in the world comes into the world and hopefully creates some new members of Christ's Body who will also begin to hand out the wonderful treasures of Christ. Thank you Lord for fulfilling Your Life-giving promises in Christ, our Lord, for us! **Amen.**
- *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.* [^{NKJ} 2 Cor 13:14].