

Adam Sandiford

This week's sermon is titled "The Twins: Gospel and Righteousness." The scripture reading is Romans one, seven to 17. To all in Rome, who are loved by God and called to be his holy people, Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times. And I pray that now at last by God's will, the way may be opened for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts to make you strong. That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware brothers and sisters that I planned many times to come to you, but have been prevented from doing so until now, in order that I might have a harvest among you just like I've had among the other Gentiles. I'm obligated both to Greeks and non Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed - a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

Don Smith

Morning, everyone. Thank you for the reading. And thank you for all those who participate in our worship. We're glad to have everyone participate.

The Gospel and righteousness are always looking for lonely people. A number of years ago, good number of years ago, Paul McCartney wrote song called "Eleanor Rigby". It's really a story about two people who are lonely. One is Eleanor Rigby, who works as a caretaker in a church in the country. And the other is the priest, Father Mackenzie. And if you just listen to the words of the song, I think you can feel like I did. I felt the loneliness of both of these people. Ah, look at all the lonely people. Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church, where a wedding has been. She lives in a dream. Waits at the window, wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door. Who is it for? All the lonely people. Where do they all come from? All the lonely people. Where do they all belong? Father McKenzie writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear. No one comes near. Look at him working, darning his socks in the night when there's nobody there. What does he care? All the lonely people? Where do they all come from? All the lonely people? Where do they all belong? Eleanor Rigby died in the church, and was buried along with her name. And no one came. Father McKenzie wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave. No one was saved. All the lonely people. Where do they all come from? All the lonely people. Where do they all belong?

Well, I don't know everyone's story. And I don't know how you're feeling today. And sometimes people who are effervescent and have a smile on their face, we think that they're just happy people all the time. But maybe there's a deep loneliness there. There's a loneliness probably in all of us at some times of our life. But one of the things about the twins that we'll talk about this morning, the gospel, and righteousness is that they've come for people who are especially lonely. And it's wonderful news. It's great news to learn for the first time, that you are not alone, even in your loneliness, that there is a God who loves you and who surrounds himself with you. We don't want to be like a little girl who was invited to a birthday party and they played hide and go seek and the mother heard some crying and went to investigate. And here was this little girl crying and she said, Honey, what's wrong? She said, well, we're

playing hide and seek and mother said, yes. So what's wrong? She said, no one's looking for me. No one's looking for me. And I don't know what your experiences like, especially when it comes to your relationship with God. Do we feel lonely? Are we being close to him? Where are we? So I want to spend just a very, very brief time today looking at the twins, the gospel, and righteousness, and how they fit together, and how it's a call for all of us to belong.

The gospel is very clear. It's a word that we hear so often, and so many times, but how do we actually define the gospel? What is the gospel and sometimes we hear, well, that's good news or, it's Jesus. What is the gospel? Well, the apostle Paul presents the gospel in a specific way, when he talks about, we can understand the gospel. Now brothers and sisters, he says, I want to remind you of the gospel which I preached to you, which you have believed and on which you've taken your stand. By this gospel, you're saved, if you hold firmly to those things, I preach to you otherwise you believed in vain. For what I received from the Lord, I passed on to you is first importance that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he rose again on the third day, appearing to many, according to the Scriptures, it is this God who spoke the world into existence, who came and gave his life for us death, burial and resurrection. The gospel is specific, but the other twin are these two towers, besides the gospel is righteousness and maybe the, the simplest way, at least for me, and understanding what that word means is simply this being right with God. We're in good standing with God, because of Christ because of the gospel, we can now accept and be part of righteousness being right being made right with God. And so Paul says, but there is something to think about. It's one thing to understand it, it's the other thing to embrace it. And to say, I'm not ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of the gospel, and I am not ashamed of Christ. This righteousness is a profound relationship that we can have with God. I am not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation for all who believe first for the Jew then for the Gentile. For in the Gospel, a righteousness from God has revealed a righteousness that is by faith from first to last. Just as it's written, the righteous will live by faith.

Saying all that to say, so how do we live? And so when the apostle Paul wrote a very personal letter to a young evangelist, whose name is Timothy, he continually reminds Timothy, that because of the gospel, and because of righteousness, don't be embarrassed. Don't be embarrassed that we're Christian. Don't be ashamed that we're Christian. Don't feel badly about, about who we are and what we believe. It took me back a number of years ago, long, long time ago, when I was a student at Great Lakes. My parents lived in Ajax and I was a, I was a student at Great Lakes from, from, from Monday to Friday. Go home on the weekend. But on Wednesdays back then, at the old church, we would walk, dressed up in our suits (we had to wear suits back in those days, guys did). So we walk from the campus at Great Lakes, walk through town and go up to the church. And there'd be people our age who aren't part of the church, looking at us curiously, where are all these people going? The young women in their dresses and the young men all wear suits and where are they going? And every Wednesday, they're going through town. And then once they found out that we're going to church, some comments would be made by those in town. I look back on it now and I think it's not such a big deal. But back then, I was totally embarrassed. I was just embarrassed by it. All I wanted is, is there a way? Can I sneak around the downtown? Is there a way that I can get somewhere where I don't have to people making fun of me or whatever it was?

Look back on it now and it's kind of silly. But at the same time, I think, are there times as Christians, that we're embarrassed by it? We're not embarrassed of Jesus. We're not embarrassed about what he did. But are we ever embarrassed to tell people why we are Christians? And Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because I have this right relationship with God, because of Jesus. How could I

ever be ashamed of this, and the only way that I can make sense of all this is the relationship that we have with our family, with our loved ones, with our kids, we would do anything for our family, we love our family. And maybe we're embarrassed sometimes by some of the things that as parents we've said or done to our child. But we would do anything for our children. We're not embarrassed by them. God's not embarrassed by you. God is not embarrassed with you. So don't be embarrassed about him. Never to be ashamed of the gospel, never to be ashamed of Jesus Christ, never to be ashamed that he's given himself for us and to us, never to be ashamed that he lives in us, never to be ashamed that because of him, we can be in right standing with God.

And so Paul writes to a young evangelist, who's just beginning in his ministry, his name is Timothy and he wants to remind him, not to be embarrassed, not to be shamed. So in this book of Second Timothy, he tells us about that situation. Paul's writing to this young evangelist, I'm going to start reading a second Timothy one, I think I'll start reading about verse three. And so imagine if you will, being Timothy and receiving this letter from a man that you've learned so much from, who is your father in the faith, someone who's just taught us so much, and is an incredible person, and you receive this personal letter from him, and he says this, I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience as night and day, I constantly remember you in my prayers, recalling your tears. I longed to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois, and then your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded now lives in you also. And for this reason, I remind you, to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you, too, by the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit, the Holy Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power gives us love, and gives us self discipline. So, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. This Grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. But it's now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and apostle and a teacher. And this is why I'm suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know in whom I have believed and I am convinced that he's able to guard what I've been trusted to him until that day, and what you've heard from me, keep as a pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus, guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you, guarded with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including, and I'm not sure how to pronounce these names I won't even try. And then he says in verse 16, may the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he's often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me and he found me and may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day. You know very well, in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus. It's just the story of Paul reminding a young evangelist: Okay, see, here's part of my story. Here's how I became a Christian. I used to make fun of Christians. I was embarrassed that they're Christians. I did everything I could to make Christians' lives miserable. In fact, if somebody were to ask me, what's the worst thing in the world to be? I would say, it's a Christian. Paul says, now I am, and I'm not embarrassed to be. I'm not ashamed of it at all. Because Christ, who spoke the world into existence, who knew me, before I was a baby, spoke my name called my name, when I was going in the opposite direction. And God called out to me, Saul, what are you doing? That's a newer translation. So what's happening with your life? Why are you doing what you're doing? Why are you ashamed? Why are you embarrassed? Saul? What are you doing with your life? Why are you persecuting me? That changed his life. He said, I'll

never be embarrassed again. He became a Christian. And he set himself as an example, telling his own story.

So here's the conclusion. How are you doing with your faith? Are you embarrassed about Christ? Are you feeling shamed, being part of a church that honours Jesus, knowing that when the communion is passed, it's not just a cracker? It's not just a little bit of grape juice. It is the fact that Jesus came giving his entire life for us. Shedding his blood for us. And it's true. The old adage, if you were the only person in the world who lived, Jesus would have done it for you. He would have died and gave his life for you. Are we ashamed? Are we embarrassed? It's the call of God that he calls out to us to say, I may be disappointed sometimes with some of the things that we've done, but I'm not ashamed of you. You are my child, and I love you. And maybe you are lonely. But because of the gospel, he calls you to be part of this, this world, this worldwide group of people who love him, and are not ashamed of him and not embarrassed of him. And are glad to give themselves to Christ. So maybe you're here this morning, and you've been thinking about becoming a Christian. It's the easiest thing to do, to accept him to say, I'm not ashamed. I'm not embarrassed. I want to give myself to you. I claim that you are my king, that you are my Savior, I understand that you lived and that you died for me. And that you rose again saying that death is not the end. And I'll give myself to you, I'll be baptized into you. I'll receive Communion, I'll be the person God has called me to be, knowing that the sins I've committed and the embarrassments that I felt or if I've embarrassed others, that God takes care of all of that, wherever you are today.

Understand that righteousness and the gospel are twins. Because of the gospel, we have right standing with God and because of that, with each other. If you'd like to know more about this, if you would like to consider being baptized into Christ Jesus, we would help you with that at any point in time. But we're just so excited that you are with us on a weekly basis, and that you've come together not ashamed and not embarrassed of who we are and who Christ is and who you are. And if we can help you in any way, we would be glad to do that.

Let's pray together. Father, God, we're so grateful to you. Sometimes we're embarrassed by ourselves, but we're not embarrassed about you. We're not ashamed in any way of you. Sometimes we feel ashamed for not living our lives, as close to you as we need to. But we're grateful that we receive your righteousness that we can belong to you in right standing with you. Even with our faults and even with our mistakes and that we are loved by you, and we want you to know that we do love you, and all those who are here, and we're thankful to you in Christ's name, and all the congregation said, Amen.

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