

## Preaching the Gospel Romans 10

We live in a visual age, an age of videos and videogames. But most Christian worship continues to be language based - songs, prayers, and sermons. Why is that?

Well, the Christian faith is based on good news - that's what gospel means, good news. And most of the time, news comes in words. Most of the time, news is a story.

Think about it. How do you get news? You can watch a newscast on TV, but most of the time what you see is the man reading the story. Maybe you see some pictures of what happened. But the story is the important thing - without the story, the pictures wouldn't make sense.

The same thing is true of Jesus – pictures by themselves just can't explain the good news. For example, we've all seen crucifixes before – little crosses with an image of Jesus hanging on them. Crucifixes thus illustrate the most important event in the gospel. But imagine that you didn't know anything about Jesus. Imagine that you'd never heard a sermon and you didn't have a Bible. What would that crucifix mean to you? Without the story, it wouldn't mean anything.

In fact, the real life crucifixion didn't mean anything to most of the people who witnessed it firsthand. Most of the people who watched Jesus die thought He was a fake and a phony. Most of them mocked Him and ridiculed Him. They saw the most important event in the history of the world, but they didn't understand it.

That's why Jesus sends people to tell the good news in words. That's why Paul says in verse 17 that faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of God. You have to hear the story of Jesus, you have to hear the word of Christ if you are going to have faith, if you are going to trust Him.

And that just makes sense, doesn't it? After all, why do you trust anyone? It's not because of how he looks – the best looking person could be a terrible liar. No, you trust someone because of what you know about him. You trust someone because of what he has done or not done, because of the way he has treated other people that you know. In short, you trust someone because of his story.

So, what is it about Jesus' story that makes us trust Him? Look at verse 9, which tells us that we should trust Jesus because He is Lord, because He is the Son of God. And why do we believe something that is so hard to believe? Look at verse 9 again – because God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Christ proves that the Man Who died on the cross wasn't a fake or a phony after all. The resurrection of Christ proves that everything He ever said about Himself was true. It proves that the word of God which Paul mentions in verse 17 is 100 percent reliable. The resurrection proves that Jesus is trustworthy.

But here's the best part of the good news. Given the truth of the resurrection, trusting Jesus isn't only reasonable. It also brings tremendous benefits. Look at verse 11. If we believe in Him, if we trust in Christ, we will not be put to shame – none of our shameful thoughts and words and deeds will be held against us. Verse 9 says that if we confess that Jesus is God and submit to Him as our Lord, trusting in the truth of His resurrection, we will be saved. Verse 13 repeats this idea with a quote from the prophet Joel – if we will call on the name of the Lord Jesus, calling out to Him to save us from our sins, He will do just that.

Who can doubt that all of this is good news? In order to be saved from our sins, we don't have to keep God's law perfectly – we can't do that anyway. We just need to trust Jesus to save us. We just need to call out to Him to help us, confessing Him as Lord.

But how can we call out to Him to save us unless we trust that He can save us and that He has promised to save us? How can we confess Him as Lord, submitting ourselves to Him as our King unless we trust Him? No, trust in Jesus must come before we can call out to Jesus. Trust must come before confession.

But how can we trust Jesus unless we know all these things about Him? How can we trust Him unless we have heard His promises? How can we trust Him unless we know about His power to do miracles? How can we trust Him unless we have heard about His resurrection, the truth that He lives forever? No, knowledge must come before trust, just as trust must come before confession.

But how do we hear the stories of Jesus' life and death and resurrection? Sure, we could read about all these things in the Bible, but everything in the Bible isn't always easy to understand, is it? Sometimes you need to have someone explain it to you. That's why we come together in Sunday School and morning worship – not just for the fellowship we enjoy, but for the understanding that we share. We come to hear the story again and again.

So, if you've heard the story, if you have believed that it is true, if you have trusted in Christ because of what He has said and done, then why not try to help others hear the story too? Sure, we can do that as we support the work of our church planters and missionaries. But we can do the same thing ourselves, as we live among our friends and neighbors. We can share the story with those who have never heard it, as well as with those who, because of the difficult circumstances of their lives, need to hear it again.

So, let's not satisfy ourselves with just hearing the story, or with helping others to tell the story. Let's go and tell it ourselves, with our lips and with our lives, bringing glad tidings of good things to all those around us.