

Let us Boast and Confess Jesus Christ – Romans 10:8-13

Our meditation for this morning is from the Epistle to the Romans 10:8-13, which was read before. Let us pray: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” Amen

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Dear Friends in Christ:

What do you do when you are in an elevator? If you are all alone, you probably stand watching the numbers for the floors pass by. If there are people in the elevator, you are not likely going to enter into a conversation with them, except perhaps to make small talk as you comment on the weather. If you keep silence; you may find yourself listening to their conversation in the elevator. A while ago I spoke with a member of the church, and he told me that one day, he was in an elevator and he listened a conversation between three student residents. It was a conversation about spirituality, in which one student was criticizing traditional Christianity.

This student was denigrating Christians. He was saying that their belief system was the oldest belief system in the world. He made the very misguided comment that the druids and the wicca cult, which we would know as witches, predated Christianity by several centuries, and that it seemed to him that these simple nature religions were more realistic and believable.

The other students simply nodded in agreement and the member of the church stood silently listening to this conversation. The member was disappointed and ashamed of himself. He was just there standing, and said nothing. Was he afraid to say what he believed; afraid of what the students might think of him? Was he embarrassed about his faith? Was he ashamed to admit that he was a Christian? He asked himself the following question: Why didn't I speak up?

I told him: “I suppose that you didn't want to get involved at the time. You were busy. You didn't have time to enter into a debate with these three students.” Then he said: “Maybe I thought it was a waste of time, since it wasn't likely that my words and belief in themselves would make a difference for them. Maybe I just didn't want to make a scene in the elevator. Besides, I know better. I know that they were wrong. No matter what they thought or believed, I know that the bible is the truth, and that God has saved me through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Friends; how often have we found ourselves believing this truth, knowing this truth, confident in the truth of God's mercy, forgiveness and love for us and yet ashamed to speak up and to speak out about the God of our salvation? How often have we hidden our faith in our hearts? How often have we failed to share with others the hope that is within us. We are not just silent in elevators: we are silent at work, at school, at home. We know the truth. We believe God's word. We just do not let other people know that we believe it. There are those who have that special measure of grace given by the Holy Spirit that enables them to boldly and confidently share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. There are those who have the gifts of an evangelist.

In our text today, St. Paul, who was one of those gifted individuals, talks to us about confessing with our mouth what we believe in our hearts. He is not saying that we all have to go out and knock on doors or stand on street corners telling people about Jesus. He is simply reminding us that our faith in the crucified and risen Lord is not something to be set aside in our hearts. It is a message that is to be share, confessed and proclaimed as we say with our lips—and with our whole lives—the faith that is in our hearts, the faith that knows Jesus Christ is Lord.

Allow me to tell you the following: A young man is looking forward to his graduation date. Unfortunately his classmates determined to celebrate by dressing up as angels with devil's tails. While he did not want to miss his graduation and the celebration that went with it, he knew that his friends wanted him to join in mocking God and compromising his faith—at least for this one day.

This young man says: "While my class went to the graduation ball, I stood in the garden cutting the lawn, wiping away the tears from my eyes." This true story is told by a 20 year old who grew up in East Berlin before the fall of the Iron Curtain. In his life, Communism was the belief that people confessed. To confess any other god, or any other truth, excluded a person from many of the things that you and I take for granted. As a young man, he learned that every student was required to join the communist party and submit to its beliefs.

Did he want friends, or did he want to believe in a God his friends claimed did not exist? When he stood up to proclaim Jesus is Lord, he was excluded. He was not allowed to participate in many school events. He was not given a school uniform. He was mocked by his classmates, because he did not fit in. He knew that without loyalty to communism, he would not be allowed to attend college or get a good job. His father and grandfather has already lost their jobs because they were confessing Christians. Would it be that bad if he just kept quiet about his faith and pretended to go along with others, living and acting like one of the group, and yet secretly believing that Jesus is Lord?

Friends, even though it meant being mistreated, mocked and denied even such simple things as a driver's license, this young man refused to bow to the falsehood of communism. He knew that he had to be faithful to the hope that was in his heart. He says: "Jesus had stood up for me when He gave His life for me on the cross. But He has risen, and He is alive. This thought gave me the strength to march on in faith."

Friends, we exist in a country where we are free to express our beliefs, our opinions, our viewpoints, without fear of reprisal. We can openly worship our God. We can confess the words of the Apostle's Creed, or pray The Lord's Prayer without someone threatening our lives. And yet, we are often strangely silent about what we believe.

Are we ashamed of our faith? Are we ashamed of the Saviour who gave Himself into the most horrible of deaths, the death on the cross, so that He could redeem lost and dying sinners like you and me. Are we ashamed to let people know that we believe in the Easter story of how that crucified Lord rose again from the dead?

Jesus once said: "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven." In truth, I don't believe that we are ashamed of Jesus and His love. The member was not ashamed of Jesus when he was standing in that elevator listening to those men criticise the Christian faith. But sometimes we surely act as if we are ashamed. At the very least, we have trouble saying with our mouths what we believe in our hearts.

But how are the people around us to know the truth, if we are not willing to share it with them? How can anyone know the wonderful joy that Jesus' forgiveness brings to our hearts and lives if we don't let them hear and see the joy of that forgiveness in us? When Paul says "**if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved,**" he is telling us that what is in our hearts will come out in our lives. It is important to tell others what we know and believe about Jesus, for as Paul says: **How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?** But there is more to confession than just what we say. Our whole lives become our confession of faith. Our words, our actions, our attitudes should all speak of the hope that we have in our hearts.

In the Old Testament lesson, Moses reminded the people that one confession of faith was shown as they acknowledged God through their faithful stewardship, especially through their first fruits, giving first to God, trusting that He would continue to provide them with all they needed for life in the coming days. When Jesus was tempted by the devil to give in to his own desires, to seek the power, the prestige and the comfort that the world considers important, Jesus confessed through His words and actions that God and His goodness was more than enough for all of life.

Do we do as much? The way we do our jobs or the effort we put into school say something about what is in our hearts. The way we give to the Lord says something about what is in our hearts. The words we use in conversation or the stories and jokes we tell say something about what is in our hearts. The way we treat people says something about what is in our hearts. We have a great and wonderful God, who lives, who acts and who works for our good day by day. We have a Saviour who loved us so much that He gave His life for us on the cross and destroyed death and the grave so that we might live in Him. We have the hope of heaven and the glory that awaits us there. We should confess this through our lives lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ, and with words that confess Him as Lord.

I pray that you will think of people you can invite to worship with you. I hope and pray that God will give you the conviction to confess with your mouth what is in your heart. Do not be ashamed! Brag, boast and confess the Lord Jesus Christ—and be sure that the day is coming when we are going to stand unashamed before Him in the glory of heaven. Amen.