

Primary Goal of Preaching

at HOPE Lutheran Brethren Church

Pastor Jim Rademaker

To preach sin and grace
... which brings about repentance and faith/spiritual transformation/a changed
heart toward God.

Faith Defined

“Faith is not what some people think it is. Their human dream is a delusion. Because they observe that faith is not followed by good works or a better life, they fall into error, even though they speak and hear much about faith. “Faith is not enough,” they say, “You must do good works, you must be pious to be saved.” They think that, when you hear the gospel, you start working, creating by your own strength a thankful heart which says, “I believe.” That is what they think true faith is. But, because this is a human idea, a dream, the heart never learns anything from it, so it does nothing and reform doesn’t come from this `faith,’ either.

Instead, faith is God’s work in us, that changes us and gives new birth from God. (John 1:13). It kills the Old Adam and makes us completely different people. It changes our hearts, our spirits, our thoughts and all our powers. It brings the Holy Spirit with it. Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith. Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn’t stop to ask if good works ought to be done, but before anyone asks, it already has done them and continues to do them without ceasing. Anyone who does not do good works in this manner is an unbeliever. He stumbles around and looks for faith and good works, even though he does not know what faith or good works are. Yet he gossips and chatters about faith and good works with many words.

Faith is a living, bold trust in God’s grace, so certain of God’s favor that it would risk death a thousand times trusting in it. Such confidence and knowledge of God’s grace makes you happy, joyful and bold in your relationship to God and all creatures. The Holy Spirit makes this happen through faith. Because of it, you freely, willingly and joyfully do good to everyone, serve everyone, suffer all kinds of things, love and praise the God who has shown you such grace. Thus, it is just as impossible to separate faith and works as it is to separate heat and light from fire! Therefore, watch out for your own false ideas and guard against good-for-nothing gossips, who think they’re smart enough to define faith and works, but really are the greatest of fools. Ask God to work faith in you, or you will remain forever without faith, no matter what you wish, say or can do.”

An excerpt from “An Introduction to St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” Luther’s German Bible of 1522 - by Martin Luther, 1483-1546 - Translated by Rev. Robert E. Smith from DR. MARTIN LUTHER’S VERMISCHTE DEUTSCHESCHRIFTEN.

And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. (Luke 7:37-38)

How this pleased Jesus! As He sat there in the house of the Pharisee, He missed the manifestation of love. From what He says later to Simon we gather that He had carefully observed everything that had been done – or had not been done – for Him from the time He entered the house: no water had been set before Him, He had no kiss of welcome, and no oil. What was clearly lacking in Simon was the disposition of the heart. Everything was formal and stiff; but there was no love behind the formality. The little “extra” which reveals a heart overflowing with love was missing.

With the woman, however, it was different. And this is what delighted Jesus. It warmed His heart in the cold room where He sat. Her tears, her hair, her kiss, her devotion and sincerity, the fragrance of the ointments, her distress, her need – all this was to His tender heart like a child's embrace of its father. And the fact that she was a sinner who needed salvation made His love even more tender.

I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou art still the same. Even a sinner's tears are dear to Thee. Therefore I dare to come to Thee. Help me that I may never be formal and cold toward thee, but devoted, warm, and sincere. (from *Rest a While* - Oct. 5th - by Fredrik Wisloff)

... 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ...