

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday After Trinity, June 28, 2026

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 37, 239:4, 376, 375, 375:5.

Lessons: Genesis 15:1-6, Acts 4:32-35, John 15:1-8.

Sermon Text: Romans 3:21-24

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow Redeemed in Christ:

There is an opinion about righteousness which is very common in this world. The great majority of people hold this opinion, that man can earn righteousness by his own deeds, by his own doing. People of this opinion like to say that what you believe is not so important as what you do. This is the religion of the world: Be good, do what you think is right, try your best to live a good life, and God will accept you. But this human philosophy is all wrong.

The words before our text give us the truth of the matter: ***“No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.”*** v. 20. In our text we learn about the true righteousness. What our text teaches is most essential in order that we may know the way to salvation. It tells us of:

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS VALID BEFORE GOD.

1. It originates with God, not with man;
2. It is imputed to us, by the just God who declares us righteous for Jesus' sake;
3. It becomes the possession of all who believe in Jesus.

“Now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.” This righteousness which Paul speaks of in our text is altogether different from the work-righteousness of man's own origin. Let us learn what the difference is. Jesus tells us about a righteousness of man's own origin in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. ***“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: God, I thank you that I am not like all other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’”*** Luke 18:9-12. The Pharisee was a boastful do-gooder who believed he was justified in God's sight because of his own works. Another example is given in the account of the rich young man who came to Jesus and asked: ***“Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”*** When Jesus listed the various commandments of the law, the young man said: ***“All these I have kept, what do I still lack?”*** Matthew 19:16-20. So also many people today believe they can be counted as righteous in God's sight because of the works they do. A lady once told us: “We don't go to church, but we do many good things for other people.” That's the righteousness which originates with man. But what about the righteousness which originates with God? The righteousness which is valid before God has no connection with the Law or with trying to do good. We must learn ever and again that we as sinners cannot possibly do all that God demands in the Law. Our God is a holy God. He demands perfect obedience to His Commandments. With our best efforts, we can do only a small part of what God demands in His Law. Our text states this important truth: ***“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** God is not satisfied with anything that is less than perfect. The majority of people do not understand this. They think that God will be satisfied with their best efforts to be good. That explains the purpose behind the character-building organizations for the youth, such as the Scouts, and the Christ-denying secret societies, the lodges, which are organized to try to improve man's moral character. But all they

accomplish is to remove people farther away from Christ and salvation. Let us beware that we are not deceived by their pious-sounding words and the publicity of their so-called good deeds.

The righteousness which is valid before God is the righteousness which originates with God. It is altogether foreign to man by nature. It comes from God. He is the Source and the Author of true righteousness. This righteousness was made known, our text says, already in the Old Testament times. It is the righteousness ***“to which the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament Scriptures) testify.”*** This righteousness is in Christ Jesus, and Jeremiah in the Old Testament said of Him: ***“This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”*** Jeremiah 23:6. Isaiah the prophet also foretold how God would make us righteous in Christ when he wrote: ***“The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*** Isaiah 53:6.

Another important truth about the righteousness that is valid before God is that it is imputed to us by God who declares us righteous for Jesus’ sake.

2.

When we speak of the righteousness from God being imputed to us, we mean that God counts it as belonging to us, even though we did not earn it or deserve it. There is something that should be counted against us, and that is our sins. Our text says: ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** We have committed the sin, and it ought to be counted against us. But the fact is that the Lord has been gracious to us and does not count our sins against us for Jesus’ sake.

Instead of counting our sins against us, God has declared us righteous. This is what our text teaches when it says that we ***“are justified.”*** To be justified means to be declared righteous. It is a judicial act of a just God. He is as a judge in a courtroom, and we are like the guilty lawbreakers who stand before Him. Instead of counting our sins against us, He declares us righteous in His sight.

This is an outstanding and most unusual thing. There has to be a reason for the just and holy God doing such a thing. The reason is clearly stated in our text: We are ***“justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*** God declares us righteous solely because of the redemptive work of our Savior Jesus Christ. The reason why God does not count our sins against us is Christ and His work of redemption. Paul writes: ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:19.

In Christ we are counted as righteous because in Christ we are redeemed. To be redeemed literally means to be bought back, bought back from Satan’s grasp whom we served in sin, and because of whom we were subject to eternal death. We were bought back from Satan, sin and death by the payment of the precious ransom price that Jesus paid. That is what the Son of Man did for us when He humbled Himself and lived like a servant in the state of humiliation. Jesus said of Himself: ***“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*** Matthew 20:28. The ransom was not money, but the precious blood of Jesus and His innocent sufferings and death. Paul says: ***“(God) has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*** Colossians 1:13-14.

Is this not a most precious truth, that for Jesus’ sake we have been declared righteous and our sins are not counted against us! This is the precious truth of the Gospel. But it will not profit us if we do not believe the Gospel. We want to learn from our text that the righteousness which is valid before God becomes the possession of all who believe in Jesus.

3.

Our text says: ***“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”*** We are not counted righteous because we believe. We are to believe what God has declared to us in the Gospel, and that is that we sinners are counted righteous for Jesus’ sake.

It should be unmistakably clear to us that to reject the declaration of righteousness in the Gospel means to reject that righteousness that alone is valid before God. There is no other way to have that righteousness except through Christ. We cannot earn righteousness by our deeds. We cannot pay for our sins ourselves. Jesus has done all for us as our Divine Substitute, the One who took the place of us sinners and did everything necessary for our salvation.

Therefore, to believe and trust in Jesus is the only way to make the righteousness declared by God our own. Paul says that we ***“know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.”*** Galatians 2:15-16. This is why the apostles told the jailer at Philippi who was concerned about his salvation ***“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”*** Acts 16:31. And Jesus is the only Savior. He is not one among many Saviors. Peter told the Jews: ***“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*** Acts 4:12

Since faith in Jesus Christ is so all-important, so essential in the absolute sense, we must also know how we can have such faith. We have heard it many times, but let us be reassured of the precious facts: In the Word (the Gospel) is the power to create faith. Paul said: ***“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. ... For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”*** Romans 1:16-17. Paul also tells us: ***“Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** Romans 10:17. Peter puts it this way in his first epistle: ***“You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”*** 1 Pet. 1:23. That is in accord with what Jesus told Nicodemus that a man must be born again, and through the Gospel that takes place.

Let us thank the Lord today for His precious gift of salvation in Jesus. Our text says we are saved ***“freely by his grace”*** or as Luther said: “All this purely out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in me.” (Second Article) Let us show that we appreciate all that God has done for us in Christ by gladly and joyfully serving Him in willing obedience to His commandments.

Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways

To keep His statutes still!

Oh, that my God would grant me grace

To know and do His will! Amen.

(The Lutheran Hymnal 416:1)

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