

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fifth Sunday After Trinity, July 5, 2026

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

Hymns: 44, 38:4, 375, 297, 297:6

Lessons: Psalm 119:105-112, 1 Peter 2:1-10, Mark 12:28-37.

Sermon Text: Romans 2:11-16.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow Redeemed in Christ:

Everyone in our fellowship who has been instructed in Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism has learned about Law and Gospel. The two basic definitions from the Catechism we use are these: "The Law tells us the commandments of God and shows us our sin and condemnation." "The Gospel tells us of the love of God toward sinners and saves us through faith in Jesus Christ."

These simple definitions we once learned are very important for our eternal salvation. The preaching of both Law and Gospel is something we need to hear in order to be prepared for the Last Day, the Day of Judgment. The Bible reminds us: "***We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.***" 2 Corinthians 5:10a. We need the warning of the Law which speaks of the Last Day as "***the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.***" Romans 2:5 And we need the comfort of the Gospel which points to the "***glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ***" (Titus 2:13) on the Last Day.

Let us learn, then, of:

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LAW AND GOSPEL AS WE APPROACH THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

- 1. According to the Law, all people are condemned and shown to be unrighteous; and,**
- 2. According to the Gospel, people are, can be, and will be, declared righteous only in Christ.**

As we consider that our text tells us about our sin and unrighteousness from the Law, the first thing we hear is this: "***God does not show favoritism.***" There are different ways of saying this truth. One can say that God is impartial in His judging of men. One can say that God is not a respecter of persons. God deals with all people in the same impartial way. It does not make any difference what color skin a person has, whether he is rich or poor, whether he has power and influence among men or not.

The point is that all people are subject to the Law of God. It makes no difference if they are Jews or Gentiles. This distinction is made in our text because of the ways in which God gave His Law. God wrote His Law into the hearts of men. Every person, Jew or Gentile, has received the Law of God in his heart by nature. But not all people received the Law in written form as the Jews did when God gave His Law on Mt. Sinai.

Despite this distinction, all people come under the condemnation of the Law. Our text says: "***All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.***" If any people in the world are in possession of the written Law, they will be judged by this law. If any people have never seen the written Law as, for example, in the Ten Commandments, they still will be judged. No one can say that such people as the Gentiles or heathen have not sinned against better knowledge.

Our text explains: "***Indeed when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.***" Heathen people, without knowing the written Law, still many times avoid some of the coarse evils and lusts forbidden in the written Law. They may lead an outwardly respectable life. Outwardly they appear as upright people. They don't murder, rob banks, or take other people's property. They

may work hard for a living, keep their property in good repair, and are regarded as good people. All because they have the Law of God by nature in their hearts. They do have some knowledge of what is right and wrong.

This is shown also by what their consciences tell them. Our text says: ***“their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”*** This conscience that also the heathen have is evidence of the Law written in their hearts. The thoughts of the heathen within them either accuse them when they do wrong, or excuse them so that they think they have done what is right. It is for this reason that one can say that even the heathen have sinned against better knowledge, the knowledge in their hearts. It ends up, then, that all people come under the condemnation of the Law and are shown to be unrighteous.

Our text says: ***“It is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”*** If there were such a thing that someone could perfectly keep the Law of God in all details, then such a doer of the Law would be declared righteous. This fact is taught in what Jesus once told a Jewish expert in the law. The man had asked Jesus: ***“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”*** Jesus replied by asking him what the Law required. The man answered: ***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and, Love your neighbor as yourself.”*** And Jesus replied: ***“Do this and you will live.”*** Luke 10:25ff. So, it isn’t familiarity with the Law that makes a person righteous, even if all the commandments and laws were memorized. Our text says: ***“It is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”***

Now, of course, our text does not teach work-righteousness! Jesus did not tell the expert in the Law that he could earn his way to heaven by trying to keep the Law. What Jesus told him was said to make this self-righteous man conscious of his sinfulness and his need of a Savior. Since it is a fact that no one can perfectly keep all the commandments of God, the Law of God reveals only a person’s sinfulness, his unrighteousness, his condemnation. The Law of God does not reveal the way to heaven. Paul teaches this fact in a number of Bible passages in the Book of Galatians: ***“... by observing the Law no one will be justified, ... if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”*** 2:16, 21 Again he writes: ***“All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”*** Galatians 3:10-11.

These last words introduce us to what we want to learn about the significance of the Gospel as we approach the final judgment. According to the Gospel, people are, can be, and will be, declared righteous only in Christ.

2.

The Apostle Paul refers to both the judgment and the Gospel in the last words of our text: ***“This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.”*** The judgment on the Last Day will be a public judgment. The Bible says: ***“All the nations will be gathered before him.”*** Matthew 25:32 On that day the Lord will reveal what was in the hearts of men while they lived on earth. It will be like revealing a secret, because we have not known what is in the hearts of other people. We do not know if another person has faith in his heart or not. But the Lord does. The Lord says: ***“I am he who searches hearts and minds.”*** Rev. 2:23 On the Day of Judgment God will reveal whether or not we have believed in Jesus as our Savior.

Why is that so important? Because only in Christ are people declared righteous. We have learned in our text: ***“It is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”*** We have not obeyed the Law. We have broken it every day. So, how can we be declared righteous? The precious message of the Gospel tells us that God counts us as righteous for Jesus’ sake. We have not kept the Law. Jesus did. He did everything the Law demanded, and He did it for us, as our Substitute. Paul writes: ***“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:21. Because of Christ’s perfect obedience to God’s Law, and because of His obedience even to the extent of dying on the cross, we are declared righteous in God’s sight.

We have said this in three different ways: We are, we can be, and we will be, declared righteous only in Christ. We are righteous, because just as Adam’s sin was imputed to all men, so also Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to all men. Paul writes: ***“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”*** Romans 5:19 This is

the fact of objective justification, the very heart of the Gospel. Paul says: ***“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*** Romans 4:25

We also say: Only in Christ can we be declared righteous. It’s not possible to become righteous by trying to earn righteousness with deeds of the Law. Paul says: ***“We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the Law.”*** Romans 3:28 He also says: ***“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”*** Romans 3:22

Finally, on the Last Day, it is only in Christ that we will be declared righteous. On that day God will publicly reveal who had faith in Jesus and who did not believe in Jesus. He will speak of the good works of the believers as proof of their faith, and He will mention the lack of good works as the evidence that the unbelievers had no faith in Jesus. This is said just before our text when it speaks about the “righteous judgment” of God being revealed. There we read: ***“God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”*** Romans 2:6-8.

We have learned, then, what the Law and Gospel reveal. From the Law we have learned that we cannot meet God’s exacting demands and are therefore condemned. From the Gospel we have learned of God’s great love in Christ and how we are made righteous in Christ. And now we should remember in connection with the judgment on the Last Day how important it is that we accept the Gospel by faith in Christ. Jesus spoke of the Gospel when He said: ***“There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”*** John 12:48 Our faith in the Gospel will determine whether we spend eternity in heaven or in hell.

Therefore, as the poet writes: “May we in faith its tidings learn
Nor thanklessly its blessings spurn;
May we in faith its truth confess
And praise the Lord our Righteousness!” Amen.
(The Lutheran Hymnal 297, v. 6)

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