

Let us pray. As Paul did, we also confess that Jesus Christ is our Lord. Help us to hear your Word with open hearts, to follow Christ more faithfully, and to put the good news upon our lips, that we may be your messengers. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Romans 10:5-15

The Lord, Faith and the Beautiful Feet

Onewa Youth is meeting every Friday. Thanks to our Youth facilitator and the Youth leaders, the OCC youth ministry is taking shape. In one of our regular meetings, Caleb said to me something extraordinary—our young people are more interested in studying the bible than playing games or eating pizza. And they want to explore Scripture more deeply. Despite the wide range of ages, our young people want to talk about who Jesus Christ is and what it means to be his disciples, which is directly related to their identity and life questions. I had to ask myself—had we not started the youth group, where would they go to discuss such questions and find answers? That question stayed with me. If no one creates a place where the gospel is spoken, where will people hear the good news? Paul asks the same question in Romans 10:5-15. Today, Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ is Lord of all; everyone who believes in him will be saved, and Christians are called to share this good news with others.

The Lord of All

For Paul, faith is believing in Christ and living by it: since Christ is the Lord of all lords, salvation is only through Christ Jesus. Our part—according to Paul— is to recognise that God has acted in and through Christ, and to believe that God raised him from the dead. This is not a simple matter to understand. Perhaps we need a kind of metaphor, especially on the word ‘Lord,’ which specifically refers to God in the Old Testament.

In Mel Gibson’s 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*, there was a scene called ‘flagellation,’ in which Jesus was brutally scourged by Roman soldiers before the crowd and his mother Mary. Watching Jesus being scourged, nothing about the scene looked victorious. He appeared powerless before Roman soldiers. Extreme sufferings removed any blessings from his lips but only agony. His ‘crime’ was to heal the sick, welcome sinners, and proclaim God's kingdom. But it was too dangerous for certain people to keep the status quo. Yet Paul declares that this

crucified Jesus is Lord of all. God's power is revealed not through domination but through self-giving love. Absurd enough, this is when we realise that the faithful and righteous one is God, not us.

Why does Paul say this so strongly? Because Israel tried another way: first, the failure of Israel was to try to establish their own righteousness rather than being subject to God's.¹ They failed to understand that no one could keep the law perfectly. The subsequent history of Israel shows how difficult for anyone to keep the law, including the kings. Still, as Paul says, the goal of the law was Christ, who is the source of the divine righteousness for all who believe (10:4). Why so?

The purpose of the law is to direct people to Christ, who has now come in person. Take an example, such as a road sign. The sign is important. But once you've reached the destination, you don't keep living beside the sign. Christ is the destination. For Paul, this law of righteousness is not the means by which God is marking out people as God's own. Rather, God's people are marked out by their allegiance to the Christ story as God's great act of salvation.

Faith in Christ

Faith in Christ is Paul's second point. Paul himself lived what he wrote in Romans. Because he believed Christ was Lord of all, he could not remain silent, but it moved him to proclaim Christ. In verses 6-7, Paul particularly speaks about people's tendency to imagine the truth as distant from our daily life. Paul's life was the opposite. In Acts 17, we can observe what faith in Christ meant to him.² In Athens, Paul was deeply distressed because the city was full of idols. It was also in Athens that Paul found an altar dedicated to 'an Unknown God.' When he got a chance to speak to the Athenians, he eloquently delivered his apologetics. He skilfully combined his Jewish Pharisaic background with the Greek cultural knowledge he gained growing up in Tarsus. For him, faith didn't mean an intellectual activity, but by which his whole being was defined. Faith didn't keep him silent but deliver the message of Jesus Christ. Especially one's name meant the whole being in Jesus' time, so it's not merely about calling Jesus with empty hearts. To the Greeks whose heads and hearts were filled with Greek philosophy and human

¹ Romans 10:3

² Acts 17:16-23

standards of good life, Paul delivered his faith to them so that they could also receive Christ as their Lord.

The Beautiful Feet

Quoting Isaiah 52:7, which reads, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”, Paul now highlights the feet. That is, it is faith that moves the feet—the whole person. In *The Passion of Christ*, in the same scene, the camera also zooms in on the feet – Roman soldiers’ who were partaking in the torture. When Jesus fainted and the commander finally ordered to stop flogging, the scene changed into a very different one, which also focused on feet—the disciples’ feet that Jesus was washing after the Last Supper. The former was full of bloody madness while the latter was Jesus’ final service to his disciples, as after that he wouldn’t have another such chance at all.

What stands out most is the contrast between the two sets of feet. The soldiers' feet were firmly planted in their sandals as they carried out violence. By contrast, the disciples' bare feet were gently washed by Jesus' own hands. God’s word was being delivered through Jesus' action of taking on the servant role for their sake. In addition, their feet had to be washed by Jesus first, enabling them to be messengers of the good news. Yet they didn’t immediately understand what Jesus was doing. After his resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, these same disciples became the beautiful feet Isaiah and Paul speak about, carrying the good news to the ends of the earth. They become beautiful because Christ first serves us, cleanses us, and sends us.

Plainly, feet are positioned from the far side of one’s body—exactly the opposite of a head. Keeping the feet in good condition is also part of maintaining one’s health. Walking the Camino reminded me how precious our feet are. Every day depended on them. Without healthy feet, the journey stopped. When we have good news for someone, our heart would start beating fast, and our body, especially the feet, would be ready to run to deliver it to the recipients. It's not only the feet, but our lips, and our smiley faces, and everything would be involved.

It makes us think about our own beginning of faith. Someone brought the gospel to us, such as parents, friends, Sunday School teachers, and ministers—they are the beautiful feet. Now Paul asks us to become those beautiful feet for somebody else.

At the beginning of this sermon, I started with this question: "If we hadn't started the youth group, where would these young people go to ask their life questions?" Paul asks a similar question. "How can they believe if no one tells them?" Perhaps someone is waiting for your

invitation. Perhaps someone is waiting for your story. Perhaps someone is waiting simply to hear that Christ is Lord. Beautiful feet are not extraordinary feet. They are simply the feet of ordinary people who are willing to go. May God continue to work with us so that we also become the beautiful feet to deliver God's good news. Amen.