

Sermon Text for November 5, 2017

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Isaiah 52:7-10, Romans 10:14-17

“Happy Feet”

When I was in college my basketball coach was a real stickler on the fundamentals of the game and especially defense. We used to drill and drill to make sure that we knew what we were doing. He had a phrase to describe how we always had to have our feet moving, ready to change direction at a moment's notice. He called it happy feet. What we went through in order to get happy feet. The instrument of choice to make sure we had happy feet was the jump rope, we jumped more jump rope than you would imagine, but it worked, it made our feet happy. Sometimes in the middle of the game as we were playing he would yell, happy feet everyone and you would see the five of us picking up our feet with an extra boost of energy because we knew what he was saying.

Today, Paul talks to us about happy feet. That's right, happy feet. But he sets us up by reviewing for us what we had heard and experienced previously in the former chapters. In chapter 9 Paul dispels the notion of a chosen people by birth and that it is not we who choose God, but God who has chosen us. He then followed that up by describing the culture in which we live today as one of striving after righteousness as if we could contribute to our salvation by following the rules and doing what is right. Rather, all impinges upon us having trust in God, not in ourselves.

Today is communion Sunday and we don't often highlight the importance of what we do together as a community on Sunday morning. We celebrate the successes of a full preschool, of Trunk or Treat, of new members coming into the church. But do we celebrate the fact that we as a community of faith take communion together to recognize who is Lord and to highlight our need to be together.

Today I want to recognize the happy feet, the beautiful feet of all those who went before us and responded to the call to go out and proclaim the Good News. Just imagine who sat in the same pews that you are sitting in, hearing a sermon from someone with a similar black robe, and the difference, the work, the happy feet that resulted from that combination.

READ SCRIPTURE

Last week we ended with the greatest YES in all of Scripture for Reformation Sunday. “All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” We find that same statement sprinkled through all of Scripture. If you look at Acts 2:21 and you read: all who called upon the name of the Lord were saved. You also see in Joel 2:32 when the prophet is talking about judgment day and the end times you read: all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. The key word in all of this is the word call.

In the Greek the word is *kaleo* or *epikaleo* which means literally “to give a name to” with the implication that you are claiming some familiarity, some ownership. So when we hear “all who call upon the name of the Lord”, the implication is that you are giving a name, a place, a title to the Lord that has an impact upon your life. It is not a simple repetition or lip-service that is involved, but rather a very active description of calling as claiming to be your own.

Salvation, according to these last verses from last week and others throughout Scripture is based upon identifying and claiming Christ as Lord. This has to be the premise upon which we start this week, especially when we use the word call. The foundation of our salvation is the role of Christ as Savior, a role that we cannot add or subtract to. Remember God does not need your help to save us. So once we call upon the name of the Lord we can be secure, we can go our way saved and secure.

But some of you may state, but in James we read that faith without works is dead. How can we rest assured, and be content in our salvation when we haven't even talked about what comes as a result of that security, what must be our response, it is not an option, what must be our response to our salvation. It seems like we do not have the choice to either go out and work or not. It is not a situation where others can free-load on God's benefits and our hard work. Those who do not take the next step after salvation, miss out completely on the benefits of that salvation that we discover in our time here.

So now to today's Scripture, we find that Paul teaches us by asking us questions. I love this line of intellectual reasoning. Jesus does it all the time. Some of the best responses that we find in Scripture and some of the deepest understanding of our faith comes with the questions that Jesus asks. Who do people say that I am? Remember in Acts chapter 16:31 the guard whose life is spared by Paul asks Paul: “What then must I do to be saved?” Paul answers by stating believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you and

your family will be saved. Today Paul asks three questions to give us a deeper understanding of what our responsibilities are in regards to our salvation. In regards to the questions, okay now that I am saved, now what?

The first questions that Paul gives us is : How can people call on the name of the Lord if they do not believe? You would not claim something as your own if you don't genuinely believe. This is a warning to those who would claim the name of Christ for some apparent gain. It is to your advantage in this culture and in this society in which we live to be considered a Christian. Yesterday we were planning an event for valentine's day for couples, I'm really excited for it. Did you know that one of the most common pick up lines is guys saying that they are strong Christians. Guys will play the spirituality card if they think it will get them somewhere. Hypocrisy is rampant, but be careful who you call a hypocrite, otherwise the log in your eye just might blind you. So Paul begins by asking the questions, how can people call on Jesus if they do not believe in Jesus?

The second question that Paul lays out before us is: but how can they believe if they have never heard. Another good question. Later in Jesus' life we have doubting Thomas who is told blessed are those who believe and do not see and we can classify ourselves in that group. But how do you believe, without having heard? Think of the people in your life who have been the heralds of the good news. This church is full of people who have in one way or another proclaimed, and allowed people to hear. In Isaiah we read happy are the feet that bring the good news of the Gospel. Who had an impact on your life so that you could hear and then believe. Can you identify that person right now where you are sitting?

The act of hearing is an acquired trait that takes practice. In Mark 4 Jesus warns that the people listened, but did not understand. Hearing is not passive, it is not done to you, but it is done by you and it must be active in that you consciously listen.

Finally, Paul get to the point with the last question: How can they hear without someone proclaiming, followed by the verse that extols the virtue of happy feet. Beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. This is our task. There is no possible way to believe in Christ without having happy feet that proclaim to any and all that would listen. And Paul emphasizes this by stating for faith can only come through what is heard.

Faith can only come from what is heard and you are responsible for speaking so that others can hear. But what is heard comes through the Word of Christ. Our responsibility is to have happy feet that will proclaim the faith so that others may hear. The foundation of our faith, of our belief is formed where according to Paul? The word of Christ, or some Greek manuscripts say the word of God which is a direct reference to Scripture. Remember this is the Word of the Lord. Happy feet come through training and the main tool is Scripture.

We will never know what to say, what to proclaim if we do not study, eat, breathe, sleep with Scripture. If Scripture is not a lamp unto my path, then we will be stumbling in the dark and our feet will be sore, unhappy, unsure.

Today we celebrate with happy feet the calling that we have to proclaim the Good News in the world around us. Amen.