

Sermon Text for July 15, 2018

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Judges 16:23-31, Romans 16:25-27

“Looks like we made it”

This is it! The very last sermon on Romans. It looks like we made it, through all of the up and down passages. I guess we haven't made it until we get on the other side of today. I may be the only person who gets excited for these landmarks, finishing Romans and starting Acts, finishing the 90 Day Challenge. So much is happening in the world around us, and I get excited for these little things that seem like goals that we are striving towards and we know that we are going to eventually reach.

What an outlook on life if we could focus on the goal that is before us and so our life in front of us can be shaped by that goal, that celebration of knowing that we can say looks like we made it. But we all have other goals in our own lives. We have goals in our jobs, in our marriages, in our finances, in our school. Some are goals that we achieve and then move on to other goals, but others we never really quite reach. My ultimate goal is that each one of us would be mature in the faith and that means not just aware of Scripture but actually living out what Matthew 25 tells us that we would see people who are hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, in prison and reach out to them and care for them as we would a family member. Now that is a goal.

That's the perspective that Paul gives to us today in his final words to the Romans. Looks like we made it, God has promised a new day, I know it may be raining where you are, I know you may not be able to see a light ahead because right now you're just trying to survive the moment, but remember looks like we made it. Live in the glory of God, because we know what we have in store, so let's live as if salvation has come down and we are living now in that salvation.

Whenever we face obstacles, look to Christ and with Paul and the entire community you can say, we've made it, it may be Friday, but Sunday's right around the corner. Live that way, as if you've already made it.

READ SCRIPTURE

I'll never forget when Michael went in to have a very delicate spinal surgery. Before the surgery he couldn't lift his head, raise his right arm, and most days his body was racked with pain. But like most of us men, he thought he could tough it out, but

finally he had surgery. An hour after the surgery I walked into his room, his face shone and as I walked in he raised his right hand and gave me a hand shake that I for hours and that I will never forget. I made it, he said. On the other side for him it was clear what Scripture means to lay your burdens down and Christ will take them.

Last week we saw the great Bible Story of Adam and Eve, and today we've got another one, at least the ending of the Samson story. Most people know of his strength and his hair and we also know that he really messed up. He disobeyed God and he paid for it, he had both of his eyes taken out and lost his strength because he told Delilah where his strength was found. Now where we pick up is where he is being used by his enemies for entertainment to prove to his enemies that their god was stronger than Samson's, and it was working. As Samson looks over his life, before he is to take his life and that of his enemies with him, he says: God, remember me and strengthen me, and God does. What do these words remind you of? Remember Jesus on the cross and the thieves on either side and one of them turns to Jesus and says, Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom. Jesus responds, surely this day you will be with me in paradise. All that which you ever hoped for will come true for you today.

Their lives were wasted because they had disobeyed God, but they were still able to look forward to God's kingdom before it was really too late. Paul says to the Romans and to us, live your life now as you can to celebrate God's presence in your life. Don't wait, because as we saw last week being saved is not enough. God wants us yes to spend eternity with him, but God also wants us to have an abundant life which is marked by freedom.

At the end of Romans Paul summarizes all of Scripture by claiming that Jesus Christ is the great memory of God. In Christ we see that God has not forgotten God's people. Jesus is a sign that God remembers us and wants us to live day in and day out in the promises that God has for us.

I'm going to do something that I don't normally do because it can seem tedious and really a bit ostentatious, like show-offy. You need to hear these words in these verses in the Greek because most of the words you know. It's exciting to hear them as directed to us specifically as they were originally written in the first century. Look at verse 25: in the Greek you have the word *dunamis*, which gives us dynamite or powerful, you have *eugellyon* which gives us the word gospel or literally good news, you have the word

kerygma which gives us the word charisma or literally preaching. IN this first part Paul states the **power of the good news is in the preaching of Jesus Christ.**

The second part of verse 25 you hear apocalypsen or apocalypse which means revelation, then you have mysterion which give us mystery, then you have chronos which means time or for the ages. So we have the revelation of the **mystery that has been present for all ages is coming to pass in Jesus Christ.**

In Vs. 26 you hear graphos which means writing, then propheticos which gives us prophet, then pisteo which gives us faith, panta which gives us all, ethne which gives us people or race. The literal translation is **the prophetic writings were to bring about faith for all people.**

Finally you have in the last verse sopho which gives us wisdom, theo which gives us God, dia which gives us through, and doxa which gives us praise. **There is only one wise God, through Jesus Christ to whom belongs all glory and praise.**

These verses are a celebration of God's plan that was put in motion so long ago. Paul calls it a mystery that was kept secret. I'm sure that's the way it felt to Mary and Joseph but the angel Gabriel's message to them is the same as Paul's to us today. In the Bible we have known through the prophet writings: for unto us a child is born, by his stripes we are healed.

Christ has already fulfilled all that he had to in order for us to be secure about our future. This is what Paul is saying here. We have made it because Christ has done it. All of this was for the purpose of bringing about obedience of faith. Paul gives us the good news that has power and that is that through Jesus Christ we have a life, not one of anxiety and uncertainty, but confidence and hope because we know we've made it through Christ.

God accomplished in Christ everything he had purposed to do. The breach, the great divide that had been opened is now closed because of Christ. This is the assurance of pardon that we need to hear.

Now do not be mistaken, saying we've made it in Christ does not mean we have it made. Paul knew that better than most. His list of sufferings could put Job to shame. But as he states in Romans, I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor

anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our life is not perfect, we may not be able to heal the loved one in our family, we may not be able to control our addiction, we may not be able to keep our family together, we may not, well, you pick what it is you are dealing with right now, but in spite of all this the reality is that Jesus is coming and on that day, all things will be changed. So today we can live, even in the midst of our suffering, in anticipation of his coming.

We are in a different season today, our responsibility is to make sure that the Kingdom that we look forward to and in whose radiance we are to live in, will be realized here on this earth through us.

Amen.