

18th Sunday after Pentecost
October 12, 2025
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
175th Anniversary of the WELS: Christ FOR Us

Romans 5:8-10 (EHV)

God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. ¹⁰For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life.

Dear Friends in Christ,

For three Sundays we are going to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the WELS, our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. That means there will be a little history in the sermons and starting next week, the Bible class will have lots of history as we see how God has preserved the WELS for 175 years. It seems like a long time to me, but Abraham lived to be 175 years old and Noah lived to be 950. So, while we are right to mark this 175th anniversary of the WELS, 175 years is not much in the history of the world. Let's go through the history of the world now. Of course, this will be a very abridged history, and I will use approximate dates to keep things simple.

Six thousand years ago, God created the world and everything in it. Adam and Eve lived in Eden in perfect peace with the world and with their Creator. But the devil, in the form of a serpent, brought temptation into the world. Adam and Eve sided with the devil against the Lord God and became enemies of God, servants of Satan. They could do nothing to fix this problem, nothing to save themselves from their own sin. Therefore, the Lord promised to do something for them. He would send a male offspring of a woman to destroy the devil for them since they could not do so themselves. The Savior would step into the battle with the devil and fight for the salvation of sinners.

Four thousand years ago, God called Abraham to follow him. The Lord taught Abraham to trust him because there was nothing Abraham could do to save himself or his descendants. Instead, the Lord would give Abraham a descendant who would be a blessing to all nations. God had not forgotten his promise to send the Savior for all sinners.

Three thousand years ago, David wrote the Psalm we sang this morning. Psalm 133 tells of the precious oil that ran down Aaron's beard when he was anointed as high priest. God had appointed the high priest and the other priests to be the mediators between God and sinners. The priests offered sacrifices for the people. The priests prayed for the people. The priests delivered the forgiveness of sins from God for the people. David rejoiced in this Psalm that through the Lord and his priests, the blessing of eternal life was delivered to the people.

Two thousand and thirty years ago, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The eternal Son of God was born of a woman so that we can be born of God. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was for us. He came to save us in fulfillment of so many promises of God throughout history. Christ for us.

Almost two thousand years ago, God showed his love for us. For on a cross outside of Jerusalem, the eternal Son of God, born of Mary, died for sinners. Christ for us is the message of God for all of history. Christ for us is what our synod has been all about for a small blip in that history. We give thanks to the Lord today that this message has been preserved among us so that we individually know Christ for us and are able to proclaim that Christ came for the whole world.

Consider again the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:

God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Paul describes us as sinners and enemies of God. God's love is for sinners and Christ died for sinners

and enemies of God. Why would God love sinners and his enemies? Maybe we weren't that bad after all. Maybe sin is just like being covered with dirt after playing and working outside all day. Take a good shower and it's all gone. Maybe God just sees the good person in us under the dirt of sin and decided to love us. That would be a nice thought if it wasn't so wrong. Sin is not just some dirt on our skin. It is an infection that has corrupted our body, mind and soul. It is gangrene. Nothing good lives in our sinful nature. God did not look past the sin to see the good in us. There was no good.

So, maybe God looked into the future and saw that we would become good. He saw that we would believe in him and follow him and that is why he loved us. Again, it's a nice thought if it wasn't so wrong. When we entered this world, we entered as sinful enemies of God. He did not choose to show his love for us because of anything he saw in us then or any potential he saw in our future. Paul makes it clear that God's love for us and Christ's death for us are one sided. We did not ask God to love us. We did not even ask God to save us. He came up with the plan some six thousand years ago and as Paul says, "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

When Paul writes that Christ died for us, think of the word "for" as "in place of". Christ died in my place. We deserve to stand trial for our sins before the government and before God. Jesus stood trial in our place. We deserve to suffer because of our sins against our Creator. Christ suffered the whip, crown of thorns and the nails in our place. We deserve to have God forsake us since we have too often forsaken his commands. But God's eternal Son was forsaken by his Father in our place. We deserve not only physical but eternal death for our rebellion against the Holy God. But Christ suffered death upon the cross for us, in our place.

Jesus Christ stepped into the place of sinners to defeat the devil as promised to Adam and Eve. Christ is the descendant of Abraham who is a blessing for all people. Jesus is the high priest who did not sacrifice an animal to deliver the forgiveness of sins to a sinner. Instead, he sacrificed himself for sinners. Christ for us is the message of the Bible and this message gives us certainty for it does not depend on us at all.

⁹Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God's wrath through him. ¹⁰For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life.

Because Christ died for us, we have been justified, that is, we have been declared not guilty of sin. Notice again, we are not justified by what we have done or will do in the future. Instead, we are justified by the blood of Jesus, shed upon the cross. His holy precious blood is the payment for our sins so that God can declare that we are not guilty. The payment was made by another for us. Because we are justified, we are certain that we are saved from God's wrath. Jesus endured the anger of God upon the cross for us. Our Creator is no longer angry with us because Christ died for us.

And Paul goes on! Not only are we forgiven, justified and saved through the death of Christ, but we are also reconciled by his death. Nothing we could do would change our status as enemies of God. But Christ died for us, and we are reconciled to God. Through Christ, we who were on the side of Satan as enemies of God are now enemies of Satan and friends with God. Christ did this for us through his sacrificial death.

Since we are reconciled to God we have the assurance of eternal salvation. Jesus calls us friends and since Christ rose bodily from the grave to life again, we can be assured that he will raise us bodily from our graves to live in eternal friendship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A Savior for us was God's promise throughout history and Christ kept that promise. Christ for us is our certain hope. I counted thirteen "for us" phrases in the Hymn of the Day (O Love, How Deep CW 545). Christ did everything for us and for our salvation. For us baptized, for us tempted, for us he prayed, for us he taught, for us betrayed, for us he bore the shameful cross, for us he gave his dying breath, for us he rose, for us he ascended, for us he sent the Spirit. Christ for us is our joy and comfort.

So, what will we do with this message of Christ for us? God has not changed it for all of history. Yet, at certain times and places, this message has been lost or hidden. Of all the people on earth, only Noah and his family trusted the Lord and went aboard the ark to be saved from the flood. Abraham lived among many people who did not know or trust the one true God. David ruled a nation surrounded by nations who worshiped gods of wood and metal. Martin Luther lived at a time when many in the visible church had obscured the clear message of Christ for us with a message about what you must do to get right with God. Therefore, fellow redeemed, cling to this message of Christ for us. Do not allow worldly concerns distract us into thinking we no longer need the clear message that Christ died for sinners. Do not allow this clear gospel to be hidden beneath what the world thinks is more relevant to our times. The WELS has lasted 175 years and by God's grace is holding to this most comforting truth. It is up to every generation to claim this truth for its own and cling to it for life and salvation.

And then we proclaim Christ for us to the world. For Christ died not only for sinners in one denomination but for every sinner. Christ for us is a message for all the world to hear.

Amen.