

Sharing a Good God who Makes You Good

Romans 10:12-17 (NIV)

¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” ¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Would you like to meet God? Maybe ask him some of your burning questions, get some of that future insight. But how would it actually go?

Isaiah met the HOLY HOLY HOLY LORD Almighty in a vision, and his reaction was: “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” (Isaiah 6:5) Simon Peter had already met Jesus in person, but it wasn’t until Jesus pointed him to a miraculous catch of fish that Simon really saw Jesus for who he was, fell at Jesus’ knees, and exclaimed, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8b) It was terrifying for both Isaiah and Simon Peter to meet God because a sinful being cannot stand in the presence of a sinless being and live. The sinful person is immediately overcome by their sin, by how far they have fallen short of God and his perfection and knows that this gap cannot be tolerated.

Do you remember when you met God? For me, I met God as a baby. My parents brought me to God as they taught me about who God is and what he had done for me, namely, that out of his love, unearned by me, he had taken away my sins and made me a part of his family. I met God through his Word, through Baptism. I can’t remember a time in my life when I didn’t know that I was loved by God, forgiven by him, accepted by him, destined to spend eternal life with him. Have I ever trembled with fear before God?

So, why did Isaiah and Peter tremble with fear and unworthiness as they met God? We start to understand why they trembled when we look at what God considers “good.” When we say “good,” we mean that it’s okay, better than average, but not perfect. But when God uses the word “good,” he means perfect, flawless, no room for improvement.

Am I good enough for God? I think that I’m not all that bad. Other people think I’m a pretty good guy, but I’m not perfect. However, God says to imperfect me, “Unless you’re perfect, you are not good, let alone good enough.” It’s so deflating and defeating, leading me to echo Isaiah’s and Simon’s cries of fear, ruin, unworthiness, “Get away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” Who could ever be good enough for God?

In his letter to the Romans, Paul answers the question, “Who can be good enough to be with God?” He wrote: “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” (verses 12-13) Isaiah confessed his sinfulness which had ruined him before God, and God brought to him a live coal and touched his mouth saying, “Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” (Isaiah 6:7b) After Simon Peter told Jesus to get away from him because he, Peter, was a sinful man, Jesus simply said, “Don’t be afraid.” (Luke 5:10b) Why? Because the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was here. He has taken away your sin and has called you to belong to him, to be a fisher of men for him.

These sinful men had their sins taken away by God. They were covered instead by his righteousness. Yes, God was still a sinless, perfect being who demands perfection, but the demands were met in what he gave for us. He took on himself our sins. He sacrificed himself to remove every stain, wrinkle, and blemish from our lives. He purified us and filled us with his perfection. By what he has done, we are at peace with him, reconciled to him, brought into his family. We have nothing to fear before God because he satisfied the payment to remove our sins. He made us not just good, as in better than okay; he made us good as in perfect, the same sinlessness as God himself. That is who you are. You are good with God and before God because of what he has done for you.

This is why we no longer fear meeting God. When we examine ourselves and see all the ways that we have fallen short in our thoughts, words, and deeds, we call out to God and he saves us because of the life and merits of Jesus Christ. As we call out, we know that we are not ruined. We are no longer sinful people who should be cast away from God, but people who do not need to be afraid as God has removed our sinfulness and pulled us close to him.

God sent someone into your life with that message so that you would no longer fear meeting God but instead would call on his name and be saved. For me, God sent me my parents and a couple of pastors. Maybe it was the same for you. Or maybe God sent to you a grandparent, a son or daughter, a friend, a neighbor, a classmate, a coworker. God sent someone to you to tell you the good news that your sins are taken away and that you are saved. He brought you to faith through the word about Christ that they shared with you, just as Paul stated: "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." (verse 17)

Now, who will be sent to share this good news of what God has done to other people? Paul sets up the logical scenario: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" Who will jump up like Isaiah who, after having his sins taken away, said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8) Who will go to tell others so that they too can have faith and not fear meeting God?

Is this that awkward moment in the sermon where your brain flips that switch and you realize, "Oh, he's asking me if I am going to tell people about Jesus"? Because it's a whole lot easier to think that someone else will do this. Someone else will raise their hand and go do this so that I don't have to. The pastor, he's highly trained and paid to do this. He'll go and tell. The missionaries that our national church body sends out whom we support with our offerings, they will go and tell. Harry and the outreach committee, they will come up with a way of telling others as they send out postcards and put up ads on Facebook, Google, and BlipBillboard. Me? I'm not built for going and telling. I'm going to follow the good advice of "stay in your lane," and instead let the pastor and the missionaries and the evangelists do their work of telling others the good news of what God has done for them.

I too am going to tell you to stay in your lane, but not that you shouldn't go and tell others the good news of what God has done for them. No, I'm going to tell you to stay in your lane meaning that I want you to think about the people in your life who maybe don't know what God has done for them or who seem to have lost that connection to God that they once had. Who do you see around the house? Around your classroom? Around work? Around the block? On the ski lift? At the bowling alley? What new people do you see around you today as we worship? Has God sent you into a lane where you can interact with these people and share the only message that brings people to faith and saves them so that they can meet God and not be afraid?

But where do I start with the people in my lane? Start by being present and seeing these people where they're at. Ask questions and listen, truly listen, to what they're wrestling with, where they are hurting, what's stressing them out. Reflect and ask yourself if these are opportunities to share a God who comes to them to comfort them, to save them? And if you are listening but you just don't know what to do or what to say but you want to share the good news word about Christ with them, call in the reinforcements. Talk to your pastor. Ask him what you can say. Arrange a meeting with him and the person God has sent into the lane of your life.

Sadly, not everyone will accept this good news message of what God has done for us, even as Isaiah found out, "Lord, who has believed our message?" (verse 16b) But when all of us are looking in our lanes for people who need to know how God saves them, we as a group of believers are going to find so many more opportunities than if we just left it up to the pastor, the missionaries, the outreach people. When all of us look in our lanes for opportunities to share Jesus with others, how many more people will not be afraid when they meet God but instead will call on him and be saved because they came to faith from hearing the message through the word about Christ from any one of us?

It is a beautiful thing when I get to hear about you sharing Christ with those around you so that they too can be saved. Let's keep looking in our lanes and seeing the people to whom God is sending us to share him with them so that they don't have to fear meeting God but will be saved. And when we share Jesus, we rest in the fact that God is at work. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." (verse 17) So, God, help each and every single one of us to share you with the others in the lanes of our lives so that they come to faith in you and call on you to be saved. Amen.