

Sermon for October 5, 2025 – 17th Sunday after Pentecost

Romans 5:8-10 EHV

Theme: Christ died...

- 1) To Justify you.
- 2) To Reconcile you.
- 3) And He lives to save you.

⁸But 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.

If you take a drive around the Ottawa–Gatineau area, you'll see churches of all shapes and sizes—many claiming to preach Christ. And wouldn't it be wonderful if we could say, "We're all preaching Jesus the way He wants"? But sadly, that's not the case.

You see, many churches focus on what you can do for Jesus. But our WELS-Canada congregations emphasize something far more comforting: what Jesus has already done for you.

So, what has He done?

Romans 5 gives us the beautiful answer. It tells us that **Christ died...**

- 1) To justify you before God,
- 2) To reconcile you to His Father,
- 3) And He lives to save you, now and forever.

Part One: Christ died to justify you.

Most people like to think they're "pretty good." You hear it all the time—especially when someone passes away: "He was such a good person. He deserves to be in heaven."

Such sayings sound comforting, but are they true?

God's Word paints a different picture. Paul writes in Romans 3:

*There is no one who does what is good; there is not even one.ⁱ
... because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.ⁱⁱ*

Before God, there are no “good people.” That’s not easy to hear. But it’s the truth. No matter how good we think we are, we’ve all missed the mark and broke God’s Law. We’ve all sinned. And the wages of sin? Death.

But here’s the amazing part:

“The undeserved gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Even though you have sinned against God and deserve nothing good, He nevertheless loves you so much that He offers you the gift of everlasting life through faith in His Son.

But you might wonder, “I hear you, pastor, but does God really love me? How can I be certain when my life’s a mess, filled with tragedy and feelings of anxiety?”

You can be certain because God proved His love - not by giving you an easy life, but by giving you His Son, as our sermon text states:

⁸But God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God’s love is a unique kind of love—one that can never be earned or deserved. It’s always freely given. It may not always show itself in ways we expect, but always in the way God knows we need.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The word for “sinners” literally means “people missing the mark.” Picture a hockey player who hogs the puck, misses every shot, and costs his team the Stanley Cup – all while bragging about how good he is. Would you keep such a person on your roster? We are that player, only far worse. Our missed shots hurt others, break our relationship with God, and earn us everlasting death.

But God showed His unique love in this way: *while we were still sinners* - hopeless, helpless, and unwilling to repent—*Christ died for us*; in our place, as our substitute. Why? To justify us before God.

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.

Our sins are not a minor thing. They make us guilty in God’s courtroom, to whom we owe a debt of righteousness we could never repay.

But Jesus paid our debt in full. He took our sin and offered us His perfect righteousness in its place.^{iv} Carrying our guilt, He went to the cross to shed His blood in payment for it all. Because

He did that, God declares us “justified”—not guilty. He pronounces this verdict both willingly and joyfully over all who turn to Him in repentance and faith.

If God has already justified you through His Son’s death, then you can be certain He will also save you on the Last Day. For just as Israel was spared from death in Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb, so you are safe from everlasting death under the blood of the Lamb of God. He cannot condemn those He has already acquitted.

Have you ever watched a court drama where someone accused of a serious crime is finally acquitted? They often break down, quivering and weeping with joy as they hug their attorneys.

We have even more reason to be thankful to our Advocate, Jesus. He not only secured our acquittal—He reconciled us to God Himself.

Part Two: Christ died to reconcile you.

¹⁰For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...

Paul shifts the scene from the courtroom to a broken relationship.

Imagine having a spouse who repeatedly cheats on you, even after being confronted. You’d feel betrayed, angry, and perhaps even hate the one who was supposed to love you but chose to hurt you instead.

If that is how we would feel, imagine how God feels toward us, who sin against Him repeatedly. Scripture doesn’t sugarcoat it:

For you are not a God who takes pleasure in evil... You hate all evildoers.^v

And again:

His soul hates the wicked.^{vi}

God’s holy hatred toward sin and sinners is fully justified. Yet in unfathomable mercy, He chose to reconcile us—turning His enemies into His children. How?

... by the death of his Son.

Take in the full impact of this truth. Despite the holy hatred God justly had for us because of our sin, He asked His beloved, obedient Son^{vii} to die for us, His enemies. And because Jesus paid for our sins, God now clothes every believer in Jesus’s righteousness. When He looks at you, He sees not your sin, but His Son’s perfection, and He loves you as much as He loves Jesus.^{viii}

Can you imagine trying to reconcile with a former friend turned enemy, who is actively slandering you and shows no remorse? That is exactly what God did for us. He reconciled the world to Himself in Christ, not counting our sins against us. And now He sends His ambassadors—Christians like you and me—to proclaim that peace to the world.^{ix} Why? So that people will no longer live at enmity with Him but be reconciled and enjoy the same relationship of harmony, love, and trust He shared with Adam and Eve before the fall.

By God's grace, we in the Wisconsin Synod have been proclaiming this message for 175 years. And with His blessing, we pray to proclaim it for many more. Why? Because this news changes everything. It fills our lives with hope, meaning, and purpose. We no longer wonder if God could ever love us; we live by faith, confident that He does. We recognize that everything God allows in our lives—including suffering—will serve our everlasting good.

Rejoice, then, that Christ died to reconcile you to God — and that He lives to save you.

Part Three: Christ lives to save you.

¹⁰...it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life.

Why do Christians predominantly worship on Sunday instead of the Saturday Sabbath? It's because Jesus, in whom we find true Sabbath rest,^x rose from the dead on a Sunday morning! His resurrection changed everything!

Christ's resurrection is God's public declaration that He accepted Jesus' payment for our sin. It is the proof that our justification is complete^{xi} and our reconciliation with Him is real. No matter how scary things get leading up to Judgment Day, our future is secure.

Yes, the events on that day will be terrifying for humanity, when everyone *will give account of every careless word they have spoken.*^{xii}

But what about believers - will that day be terrifying for us? No, because God already declared us *"Justified! Reconciled! Saved!"* through faith in Jesus. The One who will judge you is the very One who died and rose for you — and who, at this very moment, intercedes for you.^{xiii}

Therefore, *it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled [by Christ's death], we will be saved by his life.*

Our living Christ will not only save us on the Last Day, but He also keeps us safe every day until then. Even as Satan and his allies tempt, torture, and try to destroy our faith, we take comfort in Paul's triumphant words:

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than

conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.^{xiv}

Did you catch that? Nothing can separate you from the love God has for you in Christ. Therefore, you can confidently confess with the apostle Paul:

The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.^{xv}

Now you see why our church body—the WELS—unashamedly focuses not on what you can do for Christ, but on what Christ has done and continues to do for you. We do this because our salvation rests entirely in Him.

This is our comfort, our hope, and our joy. As we celebrate our Synod's 175 years of proclaiming this truth, let's thank God for teaching us this gospel and seek His help to persevere in it:

Christ died...

- 1) To Justify you.
- 2) To Reconcile you.
- 3) And He lives to save you. Amen.

ⁱ Romans 3:12b EHV

ⁱⁱ Romans 3:23a EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ Romans 6:23 EHV

^{iv} Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21

^v Psalm 5:4a, 5b EHV

^{vi} Psalm 11:5 EHV

^{vii} Cf. Matthew 3:17

^{viii} Cf. Galatians 3:26-27

^{ix} 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

^x Cf. Colossian 2:16-17 & Matthew 12:28

^{xi} Cf. Romans 4:25

^{xii} Matthew 12:36 EHV

^{xiii} Cf. Romans 8:34, 1 John 2:1 & Hebrews 7:25

^{xiv} Romans 8:35-39 EHV

^{xv} 2 Timothy 2:18 EHV