

Pentecost 10- August 6, 2023
Text: Romans 9:1-13
Theme: Not the Law but the Promise

We live in a society of laws. Law is a good thing because were it not for law, nothing would work right. In our recent history we saw the productivity of riots in Chicago and other major cities. Did that ignorant violence help anyone or change anything for the better? Where was the law to stop those riots? The leadership of Chicago decided to let the rioters express themselves by destroying property. The leadership in Seattle allowed the ignorant horde to invade a beautiful section of the city, take it over and turn it into dump where there was raw sewage on the streets and rapes happening with impunity because the law was not allowed to be enforced. See, without the law, our sinful flesh, Old Adam, will reign free, and if left unchecked by the law, Old Adam will destroy everything good. That is exactly why God gave us the law – to protect us from ourselves and yes, even the most enlightened of us need that protection. I know that sounds paternalistic but I wouldn't trust any of us to manage so much as a lemonade stand without God's Law.

That being said, the law does nothing for us with regard to salvation. If we had only the law, the most legalistic purist in the world would still go straight to Hell. That is what St. Paul is

struggling with in his epistle to the Romans today. His friends and family were Jews and many of them rejected Christ. The Jews had taken the law of God, and instead of following it as it was given, for the sake of a good life on this earth, they believed that, by keeping it, they could attain eternal salvation. This broke St. Paul's heart much in the same way as parents mourn if one of their children turns away from God. We baptize them. We teach them. We confirm them but we cannot control them. We are not in charge of their rejection of faith any more than we were in charge of their reception of faith. It's all God's doing and all human beings have the right to reject Him.

Only the Gospel can save us, because God consistently chooses to honor His promise of salvation above the Law which damns. The Law said Ishmael should inherit the birthright but God chose Isaac. The law said Esau should inherit the birthright but God chose Jacob. When St. Paul says that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, remember that hate is not an emotion for God but a preference. It simply means that God chose Jacob and not Esau. God broke the law to keep the promise of Genesis 3:15, and He can do that because He is above the law. In Genesis, God said to the devil,

**"I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,**

and you shall bruise his heel.”

God did throughout history whatever needed to be done to fulfill that promise that He made in Genesis. He promised that He would send one born of woman to save us from the Serpent Satan. Every time there was a choice of the law or the promise, God chose the promise. You and I are the faithful remnant of Israel. You and I are the result of God keeping His promise to us. Any time we begin to listen to Old Adam, that we must do something in order to be saved, we are choosing the law over the promise. We hear the serpent whisper to us. “You are too sinful to be saved. You are too disconnected from God to be saved. You are too willful, too arrogant, or too intelligent to need to be saved.” All are lies straight from Hell.

God’s promise to us is a gift. Some throw it back. That’s why Paul says not all Israel is Israel. And that does not mean that the Word of God has failed. It is our God-given right to have the free will to reject God. So, what do we do with those who reject God’s promise? First, we pray. We pray mostly to get ourselves out of the way so that Holy Spirit can work and to give us opportunities to proclaim His Word. Then we offer the gift of the Gospel again and again, never giving up, never doubting the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are children of the promise. Choosing to be a child of the flesh makes no sense to us, and it is our goal to unburden children of

the flesh, and to show them the promise that gives us joy even in this life. What a phenomenal calling we have. First, we get to live as children of the promise who know that our eternal salvation is completed and our inheritance awaits us. Second, we get to share that good news with everyone. We begin with the littlest ones in Nursery School and Sunday School and move on to the more difficult ones in youth group, adult Bible Study and people throughout our own communities. The older we get, the harder it is to break through that Old Adam. But it is never impossible, because it isn't we who are at work. We are only the conduits. The Holy Spirit is the one who does all the work. All we have to do is open our mouths and speak the Words that God gives to us.