

I shouldn't get surprised any more, because it seems to happen so often: As we work our way through a book of the bible (Currently we're in the book of Romans) just how often, our text for the day, seems to perfectly line up with what's on our hearts. And that's got nothing to do with clever planning on my part – I'm too blasé to try to orchestrate something like that... It's just something that God seems to do.

And here we are today, on this occasion of the dedication of Madison Hannah, and the very first verse, sets the context of the whole reading: **Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.**

And isn't that exactly, what our prayer today, has been for Maddie? Isn't that what **our** heart's desire is, for all of our children? And for others we know and love? - **that they may be saved...** Yeah???

Wow. God's done it again. His word – it's always so rich, and it's so relevant, and it just comes alive. It excites me.

OK, as Paul wrote this, he was writing specifically about the Jews. They are God's chosen people. Paul himself was a Jew. Jesus is a Jew... And Paul's heart's desire, is that the Jews would be saved (because ultimately, all but a few had rejected Jesus)... And in today's reading, there's lots of interesting connections with the Old Testament, because Paul's concern is for the Jews, and so he's quoting to them from the Jewish scriptures)...

But as Chapter 10 unfolds, there's a message here for everyone:

- There's a message here for every Christian who is praying for the salvation of others (And I hope that's all of us)... If you're a Christian, and you're **not** praying for the salvation of people you know, "**Well, what on Earth are you doing with your faith?**" And I mean that quite literally: What are you doing with your faith on this Earth? (if you're not even praying for people to be saved) So, there's a message here for every Christian who **is** praying for the salvation of others.
- Secondly, there's a message here for those who are not Christians. It's a message for those who are seeking and looking. And you may be one of those: You may be here today, to have a bit of a look – kicking the tyres if you like, but you haven't yet made a commitment to Jesus Christ – you're part of the crowd who are interested by the spectacle (you want to know what's going on – you want to know what this Jesus thing is all about), but you're not yet a disciple who's following Jesus with your heart and with your life....

But it's also for those who have no faith, and no interest in faith. But let's face it, they're not likely to be here today.

- Thirdly, there's a message here for those who are called to preach. And I'm pretty certain that I'm not the only one here today, who is called to preach... And there are others who are listening to this, who God wants to speak to today, about preaching the Gospel.

- And fourthly, there's a message here, for the whole church, and for us as a congregation – what part do we play, in getting the gospel out there?

So, if you go home after the service today, and as you have roast preacher for Sunday lunch, say to one-another, “Well, I didn't get anything out of the message today”... Well, if that happens, I've either been a miserable failure in explaining it, or you've got your fingers in your ears to shut God out... But I pray that neither of those things will happen today. I pray that the Lord will richly bless us, and challenge us, with His word.

So, let's get into it.

## 1.

If our faith is really real, and if we truly love other people, we **will** be [praying for them to be saved](#). And fear of what others may think of us, or concerns of creating some kind of awkwardness in our relationship, well that's not going to stop us from sharing with them “why we believe in Jesus” – not if we really love them, it won't.

...because, salvation, is the most important thing that anyone can ever attain, in their whole life. It's **worth** offending someone. It's **worth** a bit of awkwardness. It's good to give food to the hungry. It's good to give knowledge to the unwise. It's great to give company to the lonely... But surely, as we do these things, let's not lose sight of the fact, that the **best** gift we can help anyone out with, is for them to gain salvation.

To care for someone's soul – Isn't **that** the best thing we can do for them...

Alright, well what **does** salvation look like? What does it take to be saved? And so far in Romans, it's been concentrating on teaching us, that we're not saved by works – we're not saved by keeping a great big list of laws of do's and don't's – we're saved by faith.

**V<sup>13</sup>** For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

*When I met with Alex and Jackie during the week, to discuss Maddie's dedication, they were really keen to make sure that we would be praying, that Maddie would one day make **her own** decision to follow Jesus – that Maddie herself, would one day, call on the Name of the Lord and be saved.*

You see, they are very aware (and kids, I want you to listen to this) – God does not have, Grandchildren... If you believe in Jesus and follow Him, you become a child of God (in your own right), and you are saved... You are not a Grandchild of God because your parents are Christians. You are a child of God because you are a Christian.

And so, faith is not some kind of family inheritance... Just because someone is born into a Christian family, doesn't guarantee that they'll be saved. It's what **they** do with Jesus, that matters... It's about whether **we** repent and turn to Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour,,,,, or whether we don't.

And that's what Paul's concern was for the Jews...

- The Jews were the chosen people of God...
- Right throughout **their** childhood, they'd been taught all about God.
- They'd been taught His righteous decrees.
- They'd been given the law – and so they knew what God required.
- They had the writings of the Prophets – and so they knew the consequences for **not** keeping God's law.
- **And** they knew that one day, The Lord was going to send to them, a saviour...

And even under the old covenant, the Jews **should've** known what it meant to have faith. To **rightly** understand the Old Covenant, they should have known that it was a matter of having a circumcised heart. To love the Lord your God with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength... you can't do that without faith... And yet, that was a summary of the Law.

But even though they had all of this going for them, most of them **didn't** have faith, and so they rejected Christ...

And there are many adults today, who have grown up in Christian homes, but they've chosen to go their own way, and they haven't submitted to Jesus as their Lord.

2.

Which brings us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> message – **to those who are not Christians:**

And I'm going to be really blunt... What's your excuse...

I don't want to offend you and cause you to flee, but for me to do justice to what Paul's really saying here – I actually have to **be** that blunt... Because what he's saying is "There really **is** no excuse." So, what excuse **are** you going to try on today?

It's not like the message of the gospel is illusive in any way. What it demands, is obedience. In V5, Paul is quoting from Lev 18:5. And he says: <sup>5</sup> **For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who **does** the commandments shall live by them.**

And his purpose for quoting it, is *to summarise what for him is the essence of the law: blessing is contingent on obedience...*<sup>i</sup> Alright, the Jews **knew** the Law, but unless they kept it, it didn't do them any good.

And that continues for us today, in the gospel. The Gospel – the good news, is Jesus died for our sins. He calls us to repentance and faith in Him... That's the Gospel – That's the Good News... But unless we're obedient to that good news – unless we actually **respond** to it in faith... Hearing it and knowing it, doesn't do us any good... we have to **act** on it.

So, what excuse could we use???

Well, never having heard the gospel – maybe that could be an excuse... As V17 says: **faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.** So, if we haven't heard the Gospel, maybe we might have an excuse.

But in the case of the Jews, Paul says “But they have heard...  
“Their voice has gone out to all the earth,  
and their words to the ends of the world.”

And the gospel has pretty much done that today. As I said:  
it’s not like the message about Jesus is illusive... Even if  
you’re an unbeliever, **you’ve** heard it, haven’t you?

I look around the world today, and I see so many people who  
are obviously hungry to feed the soul – they’re hungry for  
spiritual enlightenment... And it seems to me, that some  
people will go to such lengths, and such extremes in their  
quest for the Spiritual....., but they just won’t come to  
Christ.

*Look at the rise in popularity of Eastern religions: Here’s a  
couple of examples: Yoga<sup>ii</sup>. Yoga is a spiritual discipline of  
Hinduism and Buddhism. What about Tai Chi? Tai Chi is a  
spiritual discipline of Taoism...*

*And many people spend hours every week, meditating, and  
putting their bodies through movements designed to bring  
them peace or health, or to increase a spiritual force or  
presence in them...<sup>iii</sup>*

It’s **not that hard**. We don’t have to claw our way up to  
heaven to discover God... God came to earth.

*In 1995 Joan Osborn released a No.1 hit song, called “one of  
us”, and in it, she asks the question, “What if God was one of*

us?".... Well, He was. God took on human flesh. And He came to Planet Earth, and He lived as one of us... In Jesus Christ, the Lord our God **revealed** Himself to us... His love. His grace. His mercy. His selflessness... And He died for us...

He's not illusive. **He came to us.**

And even though He died for us, we don't have to descend into the abyss of death to try and find Him... Because He conquered death. He rose. He lives.

And by His Holy Spirit, He lives in the believer. And by His Holy Spirit, He draws the unbeliever...

The Lord our God, is not illusive. The Gospel is accessible. The Gospel is understandable. If you **want** to find God, you don't have to go searching – He's right here... All we have to do is stop running. Stop looking for a different alternative – there is no viable alternative. Stop rebelling. Give up our pride; Give up self-righteousness, and fall on our knees and cry out for a saviour.

### 3.

So now we come to the third message – **to those who are called to preach.**

Did somebody's eyes just glaze over??? I don't want anyone turning off... How do **you** know, I God's going to call you to be a preacher or not?

The best preachers the world has ever known, never felt that **they** were worthy; **or** qualified; **or** talented... *I never*

wanted to be a preacher, but that's what God has called me to do. When it came to public speaking, I was terrible.. My greatest fear at school, was getting up in class to give a lecturette (um ar)... But the Holy Spirit has a way of taking our faults; and our inadequacies; and He pumps His power in there, and then He uses us to the glory of Christ Jesus...

**13** .... "**everyone** who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

But if they don't believe in God, why would they call on Him? And how will they believe the Gospel if they've never heard it?

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Aren't my feet particularly lovely today???

Should I take my shoes off, Robyn? So everyone can gaze upon them and behold their magnificence???

No. You don't want that. Why are the feet of a preacher beautiful? Not because they smell nice. Not because they're shapely and elegant – the only reason they're beautiful, is because they carry the preacher , who shares beautiful news...

Most preachers never wanted to be a preacher. They never felt worthy. *Speaking personally, I had more **selfish** dreams and ambitions than being a preacher.... But I knew God was calling me to preach, and to teach the Scriptures... And I had*

*to decide, “Was I going to be obedient?” or “Was I going to be disobedient?”*

And I know there’s people listening to this today, who the Lord is calling to preach. And you might feel inadequate. You might feel unworthy. And most of the time, being a preacher might feel like a pretty thankless task... But every now and then, you’ll actually hear about one of the incredible things the Lord has done through you (most of the things God does, you’ll never know)... But when the Lord touches a life, through the message you’ve preached,, let me tell ya: “That makes it all worth while”.

4.

And so we come to our 4<sup>th</sup> message: [what part does the whole church, or we as a congregation play, in getting the gospel out there?](#)

Well, seeing as we’re talking about preachers, let’s begin there. **Most** people prefer **not** to have an arrogant preacher – the best preachers are very humble people... But here’s the thing: a man filled with humility, will rarely put his hand up and say “Right, I’m ready to start preaching now.” They would never presume such a thing..

So, let me tell you how it works:

1. What happens is a church **recognises** in someone, that they have a **love** for Jesus, and they have a **love** for God’s word, **and** they notice that the Lord seems to have given that person, a **gift** of being able to communicate the

## Gospel in a way that people can understand it...

2. And when you see that gift in someone, you need to **approach** that person, and talk to the leaders of the church, and see if it's just you who sees it, or whether others are recognising it as well.
3. And then that person needs to be **encouraged**. They need to be given opportunities to preach... You know, it used to really annoy me – it doesn't happen in this church, but in most churches I've been in, when the minister was away, only half the congregation would turn up. I think it works the other way here: When the minister's away, more people turn up. And I give thanks for that.

Nobody begins as the most brilliant preacher in the world. And all fledgling preachers need our encouragement.

4. And then, we have to help them to **discern**: Is this a call of God to train for ministry, and to be sent out to another location, to preach?
5. And this is the point at which the local congregation have to **count the cost**. Is your congregation willing to lose one of its most active, and valued members... And in a church as small as Bush Disciples, you take even just one active family out and send them off, it leaves an enormous hole...

*One missionary organisation used to say, "If you won't miss them, we don't want them." Because, anyone worth sending out to preach the gospel, you're going to miss*

them dearly.

6. The next cost on a congregation, is to **support** that person, as they go through Bible College. You know, some people are against Bible colleges, because they reckon they'll destroy your faith. That's simply not true. There's some very good bible colleges out there, that will train and equip people for ministry.
7. And it doesn't end there. We need to be **praying** for them, in their ministry.

But that's not the only part the whole church has to play, in getting the Gospel out there – gettin' our preachers preaching. It also gets personal.

V9 says: if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Our salvation, and our witness to Christ, are so connected that they cannot be separated...

When a church grows, it's not because they have a great pastor – it's because the people there are passionate about Christ. He's saved them. And because they love other people, they can't keep this to themselves. And because they love Jesus so much, they can't just bottle-it-up until Sunday – They confess with their mouth – yes, publicly, that Jesus is Lord...

Never be ashamed of Jesus... Tell everyone about Him...

Don't be afraid of offending somebody. Wouldn't you rather offend them, then see them miss out on salvation?

Isn't it worth risking an 'awkward moment', to share the Gospel with someone who needs to hear it???

But you might say to me, "But Michael, I wouldn't know what to tell them – what if I get it wrong?"

Just tell them what you **do** know. If you believe it in your heart, just tell them what you believe. Tell them "Jesus is Lord". Tell them you know that He **lives**." Tell them, "This is real. It's true. I know it in my heart".... And invite them to church. Offer to pick them up. Invite them to lunch.

They might just need a bit of encouragement.

But don't be disappointed if 8 out of 10 people you invite, turn you down. Because the 2 out of 10 will really appreciate it.

Isaiah said:

"I have been found by those who did not seek me;  
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

<sup>21</sup> But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

The Lord is always seeking. The Lord is always saving. And He uses us in that mission. He uses you in that mission. Not everybody will be obedient to the Gospel. But we praise God for those who are.

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<sup>i</sup> Moo, D.J., 1996. *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://gotquestions.org/Christian-yoga.html>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Tai-Chi-Christian.html>