

LIPS TO CONFESS AND HEARTS TO BELIEVE

(Romans 10:8b-13)

Intro: The word is near you,
-On your lips.
-And in your heart.
#Roman 10:8b.

If you confess with your lips,
-That Jesus is Lord.
And believe in your heart,
-That God raised him from the dead.
#You will be saved.
*Romans 8:9.

I. The ELCA Is In The Midst Of A Book Of Faith Initiative.

A. Began With One Congregation.

1. Philadelphia Evangelical Lutheran Church.
 - a. Dallas, North Carolina.
 - b. 2005.
2. Submitted a resolution to their Synod Assembly.
 - a. Proposing a renewed focus on Holy Scripture.
 - It's authority.
 - How we read it.
 - How we interpret it.
 - b. Their resolution:
 - Adopted.
 - Sent on as a memorial to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly.
3. 2007 Churchwide Assembly adopted the Book of Faith Initiative.
 - a. Not:
 - Program.
 - Curriculum.
 - Set series of Bible studies.
 - b. More of:
 - Attitude.
 - Mindset.
 - c. We will be intentional about:
 - Opening Scripture.
 - Joining the Conversation.

- B. Why Do We Need The Book Of Faith Initiative?
1. Don't we do that already?
 - a. Not exactly.
 2. I was reading an article on church mergers.
 - a. Ed Dreyer sent:
 - To me.
 - To others.
 - b. Not about:
 - Merger of congregations.
 - c. But the merger in 1988 that brought together three church bodies:
 - Lutheran Church in America (LCA).
 - American Lutheran Church (ALC).
 - Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC).
 - #To form:
 - *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).
 - d. Article cited a statistic.
 - Among Lutherans.
 - Only 6% read their Bibles daily.
 - #Article was somewhat dated (1991).
 - #So the statistics could be dated.
 - *They might be better today.
 - *They might be worse.
 - +6%.
 3. It would seem that the word is not always near us.
 - a. On our lips.
 - b. In our hearts.
 4. Why do you suppose that is?
 - a. We're too busy?
 - b. It's too hard?
 - c. We don't know how?
 - d. It's best left to the professionals?
 - Pastors.
 - Seminary professors.
 - Biblical scholars.
 5. Have we surrendered Scripture to Satan?
 - a. Satan knows Scripture.
 - He quotes it to Jesus.
 - #In our Gospel Lesson for today.
 - *Luke 4:1-13.
 - b. Jesus and Satan were in the wilderness.
 - In both:
 - #Hebrew.
 - #Greek.

- Word for:
 - #Desert.
 - #Wilderness.
- Literally means:
 - #Wordless place.
- Not:
 - #Waterless place.
 - #Breadless place.
- But:
 - #Wordless place.

c. Satan tempted Jesus.

- To turn stones into bread.
 - #Jesus quoted Scripture:
 - *"One does not live by bread alone,"
 - "But by every word that comes from the mouth of God."
 - +Deuteronomy 8: 3.
- To worship the devil.
 - #Jesus quoted Scripture:
 - *"Worship the Lord your God,
 - *"And serve only him."
 - +Deuteronomy 6: 13.
- To jump off the pinnacle of the Temple.
 - #SE corner of the Temple Mount.
 - *With the rocky Kidron Valley below.
 - #The devil quoted Scripture:
 - *"God will send his angels to catch you,"
 - *"So you won't even stub your toe on the rocks."
 - +Psalm 91: 11-12.
 - #Jesus quoted Scripture right back:
 - *"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."
 - +Deuteronomy 6: 16.

6. Jesus.

- a. "Word made flesh."
 - John 1: 14.
- b. Brought the word to a wordless place.

C. Can We Bring The Word To A Wordless Place?

- 1. Book of Faith Initiative invites us:
 - a. Open Scripture.
 - b. Join the Conversation.
- 2. Is that so hard?
 - a. We do it here at church.
 - Worship.
 - Christian education.

- b. You can do it at home.
 - Does anyone not own a Bible?
 - #Open it up.
 - If you need help.
 - #Go to our website.
 - *www.ascensionlutheran.net
 - *There is a Bible reading plan.
 - +It says 2009.
 - =We're going to change that date.
 - =But change it in your mind.
 - +There are three options:
 - =Full course meal.
 - =Main entrée.
 - =Appetizer.
 - #On the table in the narthex.
 - *Lenten devotions.
 - *Daily devotions.
 - #Back of your Lutheran Study Bible.
 - *Bible Reading Plan.
 - Need more help?
 - #Great website.
 - *From the folks at Luther Seminary.
 - +St. Paul, Minnesota.
 - *Enterthebible.org
 - +We'll try to get the link on our website.
 - #Join a 5x5 small group Bible study.
 - *Our Daytime 5x5 group is on a break until after Easter.
 - +We gave it up for Lent.
 - +But we'll be starting up again in April.
 - *Evening 5x5 group is functioning.
 - +Talk to:
 - =Jim and Ellen Harris.
 - =Keith and Denise Khoo.
 - =Cathy Newsome.
 - +If you'd like to join them.
 - *If you don't like any of those people.
 - +Start your own group.
 - +All it takes:
 - =5 people.
 - =Willing to meet for 5 months.
 - That's where the 5x5 comes from.
 - Every other week.
 - Twice a month.

- *You can:
 - +Choose a book of the Bible.
 - +Take turns:
 - =Leading.
 - =Picking a topic.
 - +Just:
 - =Open Scripture.
 - =Join the Conversation.

3. No experience is necessary.

a. When I lived in St. Louis.

- Our agency had monthly staff meetings.
 - #We began with devotions.
- Some of us were professional church workers.
 - #Chaplains.
 - #Deaconesses.
- Some were lay people.
 - #They each had a turn to lead devotions, as well.
- #Fred:
 - *Not:
 - +Pastor.
 - +Lutheran.
 - *Would flip through the pages.
 - +Stab a passage with his finger.
 - =Read it.
 - =We'd talk about it.
 - +That was our devotion.
 - #That's not how I would do it.
 - *That's how Fred did it.

b. Week and a half ago.

- I was in Chicago for three days.
 - #An all-expense-paid trip to Chicago in the middle of February.
 - *Aren't I lucky?
- I was there for a Book of Faith Advocates meeting.
 - #Each of the 65 synods in the ELCA.
 - *Has a Book of Faith Advocate.
 - +#1 cheerleader for the Book of Faith Initiative.
 - #I'm the Book of Faith Advocate.
 - *For the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod.
- We were there to learn from each other.
 - #What's going on?
 - #What's working?
 - #What's not working?
 - *I got a lot of good ideas.

-One of the advocates told us this story.

#Darlene.

*Lives in Appleton, Wisconsin.

*Lives next door to a Roman Catholic family.

+ If one or the other is out of town.

= Watch each other's homes.

= Take in the mail.

= Feed the dogs.

= Do neighborly things.

#Darlene was in her neighbor's kitchen.

*Lying on the kitchen counter was a Bible.

+ It was open.

*When Darlene asked her neighbor about the Bible.

+ Her neighbor told her:

= "We're all so busy with:"

- "Jobs."

- "School."

- "Sports."

"We don't see a lot of each other."

= "But every day."

- "We open the Bible."

"Leave it on the counter."

- "Sometime during the day,"

"Each one of us finds something on that page,"

+ "That speaks to us."

- "We make sure we have 15 minutes together,"

"To talk about what we found on that page."

= It's simple.

- Open Scripture.

- Join the Conversation.

= But there's more.

#One day Darlene saw her neighbor's:

*Driveway.

*Street.

+ Filled with cars.

*Darlene asked her neighbor:

+ "What's with all the cars?"

*Darlene learned.

+ One of the boys in Darlene's next-door family.

= Played on a hockey team.

- Which practiced before school.

= There wasn't usually time for everybody:

- To get home for breakfast between:

Practice and school.

- *Darlene's neighbor:
 - +Invited the hockey team.
 - =To her house.
 - =For breakfast.
 - +One of the hockey players:
 - =Saw the open Bible on the counter.
 - =Asked the same question Darlene had asked.
- *Do you know what happened?
 - +Hockey players started:
 - =Looking at those pages.
 - =Finding something that spoke to them.
 - =Talking about it over breakfast.
- #Darlene's neighbor children are now:
 - *Grown.
 - *Gone.
 - +But do you know what?
 - =Hockey team still comes:
 - To Darlene's neighbor's house.
 - For breakfast and Bible.
 - #It's become a tradition.
 - =It is so simple.
 - Open Scripture.
 - Join the Conversation.

II. The Word Is Near You.

A. On Your Lips And In Your Hearts.

1. Goal:

- a. Not to become experts at Bible trivia.
 - When we still had 6F Night.
 - #Fabulous Friday Family Fun, Food and Fellowship.
 - I know that there were some people who wouldn't come.
 - #On trivia night.
 - *Because there might be questions on the Bible.
 - So you don't know who Jacob's two wives were.
 - #Leah.
 - #Rachel.
- b. But:
 - To confess with your lips:
 - #That Jesus is Lord.
 - To believe in your heart,
 - #That God raised him from the dead.
 - *Romans 10:9.

- c. Why?
 - So that you might be:
 - #Justified.
 - *Put right with God.
 - #Saved.
- 2. I received an email this week.
 - a. From Lillian Cantrell.
 - Original was animated.
 - Printed version lost something in translation.
 - b. Where is the Safest Place?
 - Avoid riding in automobiles.
 - #Because they are responsible for 20% of all fatal accidents.
 - Do not stay home.
 - #Because 17% of all accidents occur in the home.
 - Avoid walking on streets or sidewalks.
 - #Because 14% of all accidents occur to pedestrians.
 - Avoid traveling by air, rail, or water.
 - #Because 16% of all accidents involve these forms of transportation.
 - Of the remaining 33%.
 - #32% of all deaths occur in hospitals.
 - #So, above all else, avoid hospitals.
 - But you will be pleased to learn.
 - #Only .001% of all deaths occur in worship services in church.
 - #And these are usually related to pre-existing physical disorders.
 - #Therefore, logic tells us the safest place for you to be:
 - *At any given point in time is in church!
 - And Bible study is safe too!
 - #The percentage of deaths during Bible study is even less.
 - So:
 - #Attend church.
 - #And read your Bible.
 - *It will save your life.
 - *It will save your soul.

B. The Word Is Near You.

- 1. On your lips and in your hearts.
- 2. On your lips and in your mouths.
 - a. Bread and wine.
 - b. Body and blood.
 - c. Justification and salvation.
 - d. Forgiveness and new life.

3. God:
 - a. Creates faith.
-And sustains it.
 - b. Justifies.
 - c. Saves.
 - d. Forgives.
 - e. Gives new life.
-Through Jesus.
#One who is Lord.
#One whom God raised from the dead.

Concl: If you confess with your lips,
-That Jesus is Lord.
And believe in your heart,
-That God raised him from the dead.
#You will be saved.

