

Sermon for the Ordination/Installation of Moua Vang

Text: Romans 10:9 - 15 (NIV)

⁹If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ¹⁴How, 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? ¹⁵And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”



Theme: God's Gifts of a Savior and a Preacher

In just a few weeks it will be Christmas. At this time of year we often think about gifts. Some of us think about the gifts that we need to purchase. Others dream of the gifts that they hope to receive. Today I want to talk about two of God's greatest gifts, the gift of a Savior and the gift of a preacher.

I. Both of these gifts are things that we desperately need.

A couple of weeks ago I was watching a portion of one of the old Billy Graham crusades. It must have been from the 1970's because he looked very young. In the couple of minutes that I watched he said that the threats of that day such as the Soviet Union and the Atomic bomb will not bring down our country. It will be our own moral decay. I couldn't help but think that he was right. There are new worries and threats that we have today. We have economic troubles. There are worries of terrorism. Crime and violence seem to be growing all around us. It is easy to say that these threats from other people will bring us down.

Paul writes about these sins of others earlier in this letter. He writes, *“They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them.”* (Roman 1:29-32) We want to say, “Give it to them. It's because of all of those wicked people that this world is in such bad shape. But then Paul writes, *“You therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement of someone else...because you who pass judgement do the same things.”* (Romans 2:1) We are all guilty. None of us are perfect. We all deserve God's judgement. God knows every one of our dark and hidden sins. We all deserve something much worse than coal in our stocking. We deserve an eternity separated from God and everything good.

II. But in His mercy God has given us two great gifts to save us from the trouble that we have gotten ourselves into.

The first is the gift of a Savior. When we celebrate Christmas, we celebrate the birth of the Son of God. In His

great love for us, Christ took on our flesh. He was tempted in every way as we are. Yet He never sinned. He lived a completely righteous life. We see that in how willing he was to help the poor and sick, even in times when He was worn out Himself. But His greatest act of love was when He willingly went to the cross to take all of our sins upon Himself. John the Baptist called Jesus, *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* He bore every one of our sins on the cross. We don't have to deny them or excuse them because Christ has born them in our place. When He died, He was able to say, *"It is finished."* Our salvation was accomplished. God proved it when Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

Paul writes that through faith in Jesus Christ we are saved. All of our sins are forgiven. God is now our dear Father, the friend who loves us most. No matter what we go through in life, our Lord is near with His help and salvation. Best of all, through faith in Christ, we are certain that when this life is over, God's angels will bring our souls to His glory, and on the last day we will be raised from the dead to live in God's glory, body and soul, for all of eternity. God's gift to sinners like us is eternal life through faith in His Son, our Savior. Jesus is the greatest gift that was ever given.

The second of these gifts, is the gift of a preacher. The gift of Christ is for each one of us, but we won't know unless someone tells us that this gift is for us. That is where the gift of Moua comes in. God gives us preachers to tell us the good news of Jesus. Paul asks, *"How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?"* God calls men like Moua to preach Christ and the salvation that He won for each one of us. Today is a special day for our congregation. Almost 10 years ago we began ministry to our Hmong neighbors. We started with Blong Vang. When he was called to Oshkosh, I spoke with Moua and his wife Kou. I believed that Moua also had the gifts to lead this ministry. After praying about it, Moua decided to enter the seminary to become a preacher of the Good news of Christ. It was not an easy road for him. Two more sons were born during this time. Kou was also going to school. I often wondered how they were able to balance so many obligations, but our gracious Lord saw them through all of it. By God's grace, you graduated from the seminary in October. The same God who saw you blessed you in this country, who gave you a wonderful family, and who blessed you with faith in Christ, will also bless your ministry. It says in our text, *"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."* Moua, God promises to bless your preaching of Christ as our Savior. He guarantees that He will bless your preaching. You are bringing the best message ever, that we have a Savior who has come to redeem us from our sins, and that through Him, we have the gift of everlasting life.

Those of you who hear that good news from Moua, don't harden your hearts against it. Listen to that message, take it to heart, and believe that Jesus came as your Savior too. It doesn't matter what we have done, the blood of Jesus Christ our Savior cleanses us from all of our sins. As Paul writes in our text, *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* Moua is God's own messenger of that wonderful good news.

Many of you have probably given up an afternoon of Christmas shopping today, but it is good that you are hear because we are celebrating two great gifts of God which are much more valuable than anything that you could buy, the gift of our Savior Jesus Christ, and the gift of a preacher of that good news, our Lord's servant Moua Vang. May God's Spirit give Moua's ministry power, that many will hear and believe that good news that Jesus Christ is their Savior. Amen.

Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church Milwaukee, WI, December 1, 2012