

## ***“Seek the Lord”***

The good news that needs to be preached is NOT – “seek the Lord.” That doesn’t need to be preached because people naturally “seek the Lord” – even if they don’t realize it. But just because they seek, that doesn’t mean they find.

Have you ever noticed that in all times and in all places – wherever there are people – there you will find some kind of “religion”? “Religion” is man’s attempt to find God. Because the Law of God is written upon the hearts of all mankind – people know that it is wrong to murder, to steal, to take someone else’s wife, etc.

Man also naturally knows that he hasn’t lived up to what is expected – that he has fallen short. And whether he admits it or not, he knows that he is accountable to someone or something greater than himself. Factor in the chaos that surrounds us – wildfires, earthquakes and floods that wipe out whole towns – people getting sick and dying – and man concludes that something is not right, that his failures have caused this destruction.

And so, man sets out to make things right – to make up for his sin – to pacify the angry god or gods – to trying bring peace to his chaos. That is what I call “religion.”

Seeking the Lord does not mean you find Him. Following a man-made religion that tries to find some unknown god lurking beyond the clouds only leaves man in doubt. Usually, the god we conjure up is an angry, scorekeeping god – who keeps track of the good and the evil that each man does.

Folks, that’s a game you cannot win. You will always be behind in the count – and striking out is ... “not good.” Try as hard as you can and the score is always against you. And who’s to say what the winning ratio of “good” to “bad” is? It’s a game where you never know what the score is.

After playing that game for awhile you get tired of it, frustrated – and the easy way out is to simply deny that there is a god after all – that life just IS, and when it’s over, it’s over. But even in that denial, there’s always that nagging impulse to “seek the Lord.”

When the heart is not at rest, it begins to “seek the Lord” again – but this time, it takes a different tact. Instead of the scorekeeping god who never satisfies – a popular alternative is to “seek the Lord” in your heart. That’s much more satisfying because I can craft a god after my own desires.

That score that always stood against me ... well ... after further review ... the god I created says that it’s not sin after all! If I get to create and define things – then I can make sure the ratio of good to bad always favors me – that my god always favors me. But even that lie doesn’t give peace in the long run. We still know our sin, and what we deserve.

Dearly beloved – seeking the Lord apart from where He promises to be found – always leads to the same place, and the same conclusion. “I am finished.” I’m doomed. I’m a dead, damned sinner.

The good news is not in seeking the Lord – but in the promise that “He may be found.” That’s a sermon that needs to be preached – which you need to hear and believe!

Rather than the endless seeking of a hidden God – the one, true God reveals Himself to you. He locates Himself “for you” so that He may be found. But that is NOT YET “good news” for the sinner – because if the Lord is nothing but an angry judge – then revealing Himself will only chase you away.

The Lord says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” If you are left to do the searching and the finding and determining how things work with God – then you will always be lost.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard highlights this truth. We grumble right along with the first ones hired who received only one denarius. That’s not how we’d run things! The Lord’s system isn’t fair. Those who work harder and longer deserve more wages – and the last-minute workers deserve a lot less (if anything at all).

You realize that’s seeing God as nothing more than a scorekeeper – that you’re telling God how to run His business. Remember, His thoughts are not your thoughts – and your ways are not His ways. His business is seeking and saving sinners – dead, damned sinners ... like us.

“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?” He says. And yet, God doesn’t leave you twisting in the wind – He makes His WILL known to you.

He doesn’t leave the shepherds on the hillside outside of Bethlehem to craft their own “peace on earth” – but by His Word, He leads them to find the Christ-child in the manger – the Savior who is born for you. So also for you today – He doesn’t leave you to your own scorekeeping thoughts and ways – but leads you by His Word to His Christ who is “for you.”

It’s true, there is something wrong between you and God. You are a sinner – and God is rightly angered by your sin. You deserve nothing but His temporal and eternal punishment – yet, He does not leave you to live a tormented life – but makes know to you His “peace on earth.”

He sends His Son, Jesus Christ, to seek you and find you – to take all your sin into His flesh, and shedding His blood to redeem all your sin, He declares – “It is finished.” No sin is outside His forgiveness – no sinner beyond His redemption – even if you think differently.

When Jesus makes His way to the cross – He doesn’t leave a single sin behind. Whether in the first hour of the last hour – “It is finished” for you – so that YOU are not finished forever. The “peace on earth” that you so desperately seek – God gives it to you freely. Through faith in His Son, your Savior – God and man are reconciled! [P]

“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.” The Lord God who is over and above all things – has come near to you in the flesh and blood of His Son Jesus Christ. His “thoughts and ways” are to have compassion on sinners – to “abundantly pardon” all your sin.

That’s why we sing “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.” Peace TO YOU, for you are reconciled to God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.