Evergreen Presbyterian Church

Pastor Adam Parker

November 8th, 2026

Sermon Title: Preaching and Hearing

Sermon Text: Romans 10:13-21

Rom. 10:10 With the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Rom. 10:11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Rom. 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For

Rom. 10:13 “[E]veryone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Rom. 10:14 ¶ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Rom. 10:15 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!”

Rom. 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Rom. 10:18 ¶ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for

> “Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
> and their words to the ends of the world.”

Rom. 10:19 ¶ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says,

> “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation;

with a foolish nation I will make you angry."

Rom. 10:20 ¶ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,

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

Rom. 10:21 ¶ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Main Idea: The preaching of God's word is necessary in order for someone to come to faith in Christ.

Outline:

1. God Has Provided Preaching (10:14-17)
2. Listeners are Without Excuse (10:18-20)
3. The Obstinate Heart is Guilty (10:21)

Introduction

Last week, we spent time dwelling on what it means that Christ is the End of the Law. And as we saw the week before, the Jewish people (by and large) have stumbled because of their unbelief in Christ, and their own stubborn insistence on clinging to the external signs and oracles without actually following them to Jesus Christ. And the vast majority of them continue to live in the shadow instead of going to the substance, which is Jesus Christ.

And as we approach today's text, the predominant concern that Paul has going into it is this: if the people of Israel have been given the word of God, if they have the ceremonies that point to Christ, if they have the history of God's redemption, why don't they believe?

And here is why today's passage is so important: if Paul *didn't* say what he says in today's passage, we might wrongly conclude that Israel failed to follow Christ because *God* failed to provide the message of Christ to them in the first place. We

might be able to say, “Maybe God has given us something that he didn’t give to Israel. Maybe Israel has a perfectly good excuse: ‘God, you didn’t tell me.’”

And that is simply not the case. Paul is at pains this morning to show that God’s promises haven’t failed, that God has not been silent, and that the Lord hasn’t left Israel without a witness.

In other words, today’s passage is Paul’s argument that Israel has been left without excuse by God, and that it is each unbelieving person – Jew or Gentile – who is responsible for their own refusal to respond to the ministry of the word.

So the occasion for this discussion about preaching by Paul is Jewish unbelief, but this is also one of the great passages in Scripture about the importance of preaching and the power of something as simple as public proclamation of God’s word.

The larger point here is to defend God, because he has given Israel plenty of light. But in the course of making his point, all of us are going to have a great opportunity to reflect on the importance of preaching.

<u>So today we’re going to see first, that God Has Provided Preaching, second we’ll see that because of God’s preaching, Listeners are Without Excuse. And then third we’ll see from this passage that it is the Obstinate Heart that is Guilty of unbelief.</u>

Let me walk us through Paul’s thinking here this morning.

1. God Has Provided Preaching (10:14-17)

<u>First, we’re told that God has provided preaching.</u> Listen to verse 14 again:

> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

If you almost work your way backwards here Paul is showing us the chain. How is it that someone is brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ? Well first, someone has to preach Jesus Christ. Only then, Paul says, will they have heard of Jesus Christ. Once someone hears of Jesus Christ, they are in a position to believe in Jesus. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, then they will “call on him.”

This doesn't mean everyone's story is the same. Hardly!

Each of us is different, and we have come to Christ in different ways. I was raised in the church. So all my childhood I heard passionate preaching, and I don't recall ever really responding to what I heard. I have memories from when I was very young – maybe 3 or 4 years old. During the sermons I would crawl under the pews too quickly for my parents to catch me. I was a bad sermon listener and I wouldn't sit still. My parents could not contain me.

Even as a teenager, I would pay attention to most of the service, but when the sermon came, I totally checked out. I might look up if our pastor got loud. My pastor often cried in the pulpit. I usually paid attention then. But I have really no memory of hearing or believing the things I was hearing.

But the Lord eventually changed my heart as a teenager, and it was almost like all of those things I'd been ignoring all those years suddenly locked into place and solidified the truth for me. I eventually came to faith in the Lord Jesus, but as Paul says here, I couldn't have called on him until I believed in him. And I couldn't believe in him until I heard of him. And I couldn't hear of him apart from preaching.

I suppose my own story is an illustration of the fact that sometimes there is a long delay between when we hear the Word of God and when we actually call on Jesus Christ. For many of you, don't remember ever *not* believing. You may have trusted Jesus Christ from an early age. Other of us do remember not believing. But the point is, we need preaching.

We need God's word to speak to us.

And isn't this amazing? A guy gets up, and reads out of a book, explains what the book says, and God uses it to change our hearts! That's just stunning, if you think about it. I think that's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:21 that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe." It's not just that preaching is foolish, but that the message we preach feels like foolishness. We preach a man who was crucified instead of preaching a heroic figure who crushed and smacked down all of his enemies. A man died, and we worship him. That does seem pretty foolish. And we proclaim it with words. God didn't appoint a movie or a picture or

a statue or anything of the sort to proclaim Christ to the world: he decided to use preachers who simply come equipped with words.

And then God uses the ideas contained in those words to change hearts!

Now, when you hear *faithful* preaching, you aren't merely hearing a preacher: you are hearing God. Because those who preach are raised up by God and sent by God. John Newton says, "None but He who made the world can make a minister." Look at this: keep going in verse 15:

> 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!"

J.I. Packer says, "A true sermon is an act of God and not a mere performance by man." Why is that? According to Paul, God appoints the necessary chain of means so that sinners might hear and believe. And so here is what I hope for all of us: my hope is that we would see the regular proclamation of the word of God as an incredible indescribable privilege, and bathe our listening to it in a spirit of prayer and gratitude because it's actually a really big deal to God.

It is actually incredibly easy to take the preaching of the Bible for granted. As I said, I heard good faithful preaching throughout my childhood and totally took it for granted. And if you grew up in the church, and preaching is all you've known, you may have no idea what you have been receiving.

This world is trapped in darkness and confusion. Every day we see in the news stories of people trying to just feel their way through life and through the world, making it up as they go, and they're leading others along with them.

They aren't living by the light of God's word. They aren't thinking God's thoughts after him. They are listening to themselves and their own hearts. They're listening to the world, but not God. And is it any surprise that when people live that way, they come up empty?

I remember as a kid, every time my mom would serve me food I didn't want, she would do the "starving children" routine. "Don't you know that there are starving children around the world, and they would do anything to be able to eat this bologna?" And with enough guilt I could be persuaded to eat.

Well it actually is a good exercise to remember what we have received, and to remember that not everyone has it. The word of God is precious. It's more precious than gold. It's the most precious thing in the world.

Preachers do not grow on trees. They are sent by God. When he is faithfully proclaiming what God has said in his word, you are really hearing a sermon from God to you. It's really Jesus getting up and preaching for us.

When it comes to preachers, it is true that some are better than others, but if you have a faithful minister, you have a gift.

Speaking for most preachers, I think I can say, we all have areas where we are gifted. We all have big blind spots. Many of us have favorite subjects that we revisit over and over again. Some of us use the same illustrations repeatedly. Eventually as time goes on you more and more can see the strengths and weaknesses of the minister that God has given to you. But in all of it (weaknesses and all), we should thank God.

I came across this quote from Peter Martyr Vermigli, and he makes an important point:

> "If Christian people have a good pastor, they have reason to give thanks to God, who not only took care to administer salvation to them but also gave them a holy and upright pastor; but if he should be bad, let them equally acknowledge the goodness of God, which (since they did not deserve a good pastor anyway) allowed his word and sacraments to be administered to them through such a man rather than willing that they be deserted..."[1]

Pretty blunt of Peter Martyr to say it, but it is true: we are sinners. We don't deserve to hear God's word. We don't deserve a good pastor. We don't deserve a Pastor at all. We don't by nature even deserve to hear God's word in the first place. But if we have a pastor, we should be thankful, because God is still giving us his word. And if we have a *good pastor*, even moreso!

[1] Commentary on Romans 10:15.

Paul asks this question of people who have heard preaching. Just because you hear the preaching doesn't mean you believe the preaching. So he asks, from Isaiah 53, "Who has believed our message?" Just as we should not take faithful preaching for granted, we also shouldn't take faith for granted, if we have it. If you hear the word of God and believe what you hear, that is a gift. I'm not going to quote him at this point, but Peter Martyr makes another point in his commentary where he says we shouldn't be surprised that people don't believe. What should truly shock us is that *anyone* believes. That is the true miracle, because when someone believes, God is sending out his merciful spirit – and that is something God doesn't owe to us.

So if you believe today, it is really healthy for you to praise God and thank him that you are in Christ and that you believe the gospel. But also thank him for the preaching of the gospel that God used to bring you to faith in the first place.

This is the first point this morning: God has provided preaching. He has provided it to Israel, and he has provided it to us.

2. Listeners are Without Excuse (10:18-20)

<u>Secondly, Paul shows us that listeners are without excuse.</u> Here is what he says in verses 18-20:

> But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."
>
> But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry."
>
> Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me."

In this case Paul is saying, Israel's rejection of Christ cannot be fully explained by a lack of hearing nor a simple lack of understanding.

The question Paul turns to is a follow up to what's been said: okay: people can't believe unless they hear. They can't hear if no one preaches. So do the Jewish

people have an argument here, then? Maybe they didn't hear. Maybe no one preached.

What Paul does here is, he quotes three Scripture passages. And all three of them are collectively making the argument that they have, in fact heard Jesus Christ preached. The witnesses come from the whole range of Old Testament passages. He quotes from the law, the prophets, and the writings. He brings in the Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah to say resoundingly, "Yes, Israel has heard!" Their whole existence God has been preaching Jesus Christ to them. In every period of Israel's life, Jesus Christ has been held out to them.

Jesus was the Passover lamb in Exodus 12. He was the Bronze serpent in Numbers 21. He was the suffering king of Psalm 22, the true shepherd of Psalm 23. He was the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and the righteous branch of Jeremiah 23.

They heard it. It was there. They didn't believe. And so if they do not believe, then they are without excuse.

3. The Obstinate Heart is Guilty (10:21)

<u>That takes us to our third point this morning, which is the guilt of an obstinate heart.</u>

Because you see, Israel didn't miss Jesus Christ because he wasn't there or because they never heard him preached. They missed him because they didn't want him. "Someone other than him. Someone who lets me be the hero, who lets me be my own righteousness, who doesn't take away my bragging rights. Someone else. A political leader. A revolutionary. Anything other than Jesus."

This is a hard point to conclude on, because it is so grim. But it is an important warning for each of us. Look at verse 21. Here Paul quotes from Isaiah 65(:2):

> "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Paul has told us what wasn't the cause of Israel's unbelief. It wasn't caused because they were ignorant. Their unbelief didn't happen because they just didn't know. In fact, Jesus was preached to them in their ceremonies, in their feast days,

in their law, and in everything they did. All of the law and prophets spoke of him. They lacked nothing.

So what is to blame? Paul has told us through the words of Isaiah: unbelief happens because people have hard hearts, resist God, and are set against him. God has taken the initiative through the entire life of Israel. He's never left them in the dark or without a witness. Yet each step of the way Israel has remained resistant and disobedient.

Because they had the truth proclaimed to them, this is not a matter of knowledge or the mind. It's a matter of love and of the heart.

Because of this Israel bears the full responsibility for God's judgment. And I would remind all of us as well: I hope there are people in your life whom you are sharing Jesus Christ with. I hope that you have opportunities to tell people about the Lord. But if you have done this, then you have almost certainly also experienced the rejection that comes along with telling the truth, as well.

I remember sharing the gospel with a girl when I was in high school. And after I told her about Jesus, she still never came to our Bible studies or went to church or anything like that. And I was talking with my best friend at the time, Matt, and he reminded me: our responsibility is to be faithful and tell the truth and live out the truth for people to see. But even if we're bad at sharing the gospel… even if we're poorly spoken or don't know as much about the gospel as we wish we did… it is this person who is responsible to believe, not you.

Conclusion

According to verse 21, the reason the vast majority of Israel still has not come to Christ is not a lack of light: it is an inward moral rebellion of the heart.

Israel heard the truth, but they refused to believe. We can have all the truth in front of us, but still resist it. Don't just make this about Israel.

What about you? What light has God given to you? Have you heard the good news that Jesus Christ saves sinners? Have you been told that in Jesus Christ, we have forgiveness of sins? Have you heard the truth? Maybe the preaching was weak.

Maybe you found it boring. Maybe the delivery lacked enthusiasm. Maybe you felt distracted. Maybe… maybe… maybe… we come up with so many excuses. But we hear the truth many times and in many ways. But on the last day, none of us will be able to say, “I didn’t know. I didn’t have the opportunity. Nobody told me.”

If you have heard the gospel, then God has given you a witness to the truth. If you have shared the gospel, then the Lord has used you to be a witness to the truth. That is our role, then: to hear and believe… and then to share and to be faithful.

Let’s pray.