

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Where Are You At? Part 4: Righteous before God, in Christ**

July 31st, 2022. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Genesis 15:1-8; Matthew 6:25-34; Romans 4**

1. The Righteousness of God: What is it?

- Oxford Learner's Dictionary definition of righteous:
 - **"morally right and good"**
 - **a righteous God**
- Miriam-Webster dictionary defines "righteous" (adjective):
 - "acting in accord with divine or moral law: free from guilt or sin"
 - "morally right or justifiable" - e.g. a righteous decision
 - "arising from an outraged sense of justice or morality" - e.g. righteous indignation

'Righteousness' is the noun form of the adjective 'righteous.'

- With God, it is possible to become righteous simply by believing what God says or promises. This is called righteousness by faith. The righteousness obtained from God is also called the "righteousness of God" - God simply gives it to us, not because we deserve it but because we believe God.
- **Examples:**
 - **Abraham**

3And **Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.** 4Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." 5**He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them."** Then he said to him, **"So shall your offspring be."**

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:3-6 NIV
 - **Martin Luther**

Martin Luther, the German priest whose protest about the doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church started the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. Luther was well educated, "lived as a monk without reproach," but he saw himself as a sinner before God and had "an

extremely disturbed conscience.”¹ He realized that he did not love others. He was angry with God for being a righteous God who did not let sin go without punishment; Luther was satisfied with his life as a monk, and that didn’t seem enough for God.

The very notion of the “righteousness of God,” which he had been taught to philosophically understand as “active righteousness ... with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner,”² invoked hatred in him. But something happened to him, as he recounts:

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, “the righteousness of God is revealed as it is written, He who through faith is righteous shall live.” There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely faith. And this is the meaning: The righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”³

- **We have the righteousness of God, through our faith in Christ**
 - We are justified in God’s eyes, and saved from sin and failures of the past, guilt, and fear.
 - We obtain the “righteousness of God” by faith in Christ. Like Abraham, righteousness is credited or reckoned to us.”

“Without weakening in his faith, **he [Abraham] faced the fact that his body was as good as dead**—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. **Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” 23 The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**” Romans 4:20-25 NIV

¹ Luther, Martin. “Preface to the First Volume of His Latin Writings [1545],” 29

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

2. Why is the "Righteousness of God" important for us? Some reasons:

○ **Fruitful Field**

Righteousness has the effect of making us and, our fields of endeavor, fruitful. The righteousness that comes from God turns the wilderness into a fruitful field. We see this in the prophesy of Isaiah to Israel:

"...until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and **the wilderness becomes a fruitful field**, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

16Then **justice will dwell in the wilderness**, and **righteousness abide in the fruitful field**. **17The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever**. 18My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.
Isaiah 32:15-19 NRSV

○ **Power in Prayer**

- **God's ears are open to the prayers of the righteous**

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer." 1 Peter 3:12, Psalm 34:15 NRSV

- **The Church at prayer and Elijah's example**

13Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. 14Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. 16Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. **The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective**. **17Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth**. **18Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest**.

James 5: 13-18 NRSV

- **Abraham's example - praying for Sodom & Gomorrah**

Note how Abraham pleads his case with God:

23Then Abraham came near and said, **"Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"** 24Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? **25Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked!** Far be that from you! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"** 26**And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake."** Genesis 18:23-26 NRSV

- **Living and facing life without fear**

"The wicked flee though no one pursues, but **the righteous are as bold as a lion.**"

Proverbs 28:1 NIV

- **Clothed with favor**

"But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you. **For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover them with favor as with a shield.**" Psalm 5:11-12 NRSV

- **The righteous have divine support and protection**

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all. He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken."

Psalm 34:10, 19-20 NRSV

- **The righteous are provided for**

"The young lions suffer want and hunger, but **those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.**" Psalm 34:10 NRSV

"I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are ever giving liberally and lending, and **their children become a blessing.**" Psalm 37:25-26 NIV

3. How are we to live? “The Righteous Shall Live by Faith”!

- In Christ, we obtain eternal life by faith
- In our daily lives, here and now, we must also live by faith i.e., we must live by our confidence in God.

“Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

For yet “in a very little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay; but **my righteous one will live by faith. My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back.**”

But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.” Hebrews 10:35-38 NRSV

- We must continually seek God’s kingdom and His righteousness - daily.
 - **“seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”** Matthew 6:33 NIV
 - **“17For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.”** Romans 4:17-18 NIV
- Let’s be bold in our prayer life

“Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. **Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

Hebrews 4:14-16 NRSV