

works. God's gospel calls on us to acknowledge, receive, and appropriate it as what it is; and doing this by the power and the grace coming to us in the gospel..." (47) God not only provides exactly what we need – *forgiveness in Jesus*, but He also gives us the ability to receive it – *by grace through faith!*

- b. ⁶ **And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.** Yes, *this good news of the gospel is for you and you and you...* AND having Jesus will change your life – ✦ your attitude about sin, ✦ your use of the Bible, ✦ your pattern of worship, ✦ your work ethic, ✦ your interaction with others, ✦ your Christmas celebration, and ✦ so much more! Here at Bethlehem, our desire is to work with all people who are interested in knowing Jesus as Savior, growing in the Bible, and living as Christians!

Conclusion: Paul concluded the introduction of his letter to the Romans with these words: ⁷ **To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints** [*not people who never sin, but people who remain united to Jesus – the only Savior from sin*]: **Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.** Grace and peace – *God's undeserved love and forgiveness in Jesus*; **what great blessings we have in Jesus Christ!** Now, *as forgiven sinners who belong to Jesus*, let us show in ✦ word and ✦ action that we are followers of Jesus Christ!

And all God's people said: *Amen!*

The Call Is Going Forth: May All by Faith Belong to Jesus!

Based on Romans 1:1-7 NIV

4th Sunday in Advent – 2010

December 19 → 8:15 & 10:45

Introduction: Dear friends, as Christmas draws near, I'm guessing you have done something ✦ with a tree, ✦ with presents, and ✦ with family plans, **BUT are you ready in the most important way?** Michelle Van Loon wrote this short *but important statement*: **"I've learned there is only one thing necessary to celebrate Christmas properly: Jesus Christ."** In fact, the word "Christmas" means *the celebration or the festival of the Christ!*

As I stand here today, I remember many of my own Christmas celebrations: We had ✦ a tree, ✦ many presents, ✦ family plans, and ✦ so much more, *BUT we did not have Jesus Christ – EVEN THOUGH WE THOUGHT WE DID!*

Today, as we focus on the beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans, may God → strengthen those who believe in Jesus as Savior and → bring all others to belong to Jesus by faith!

1. **Paul's Position** – ^{NIV} **Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God...**
 - a. Servant – The NIV uses "servant" but the Greek is literally "slave." Going further, a slave is owned by his master; therefore, his master's will is his will. That was true for Paul and is true today for all who

belong to Jesus Christ! Paul wrote: ^{NAS} **Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..."

- b. Apostle – That is someone who has been personally (*immediately*) called by Jesus for the purpose of being sent on a mission with full authority. That idea is picked up here: ^{NIV} **2 Corinthians 5:20** "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors [*official representatives*], as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: **Be reconciled to God.**"
- c. The gospel of God – *the good news of God's forgiveness through Jesus!* Some see it and some are blind to it: ^{NAS} **1 Corinthians 1:18** "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

2. **More about the Gospel** – Later in Romans chapter 1, Paul wrote this description of the gospel: ^{NAS} **Romans 1:16** "...it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." – *not in general, but in Jesus as Savior!*

- a. ² **the gospel he [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures** ³ regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David... Let us understand that the promises in the OT are not *from men*, but GOD SPOKE THROUGH MEN to transmit those promises to us and others! Those promises deal with God's Son: ✦ who existed with the Father from eternity (*before creation*), ✦ through whom the Father created all things, and

✦ who put on human flesh through Mary – a descendant of David! Lenski notes: "He who was God became man without ceasing to be God." (35)

- b. ⁴ **and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.** As human beings, we tend to be skeptical; *we want proof!* Therefore, *in a super-powerful way*, God has given us proof of Jesus being His very Son and our very Lord "**by His resurrection from the dead.**" The Bible has these words of warning, explanation, and encouragement: ^{NIV} **1 Corinthians 15:2** By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. [**This is that gospel:**] ³ ...Christ died for our sins..., ⁴ ...he was buried, ...he was raised on the third day..., ⁵ and...he appeared to many... So to believe **this gospel** is not just to agree with the facts, but to actually receive Jesus as Savior!

3. **The Call to Belong to Jesus** – You can close your ears or, *by God's grace and power*, receive Jesus as your Savior from sin and hell!

- a. ⁵ **Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles [*literally – all the nations*] to the obedience that comes from faith.** Therefore, the call is going forth → *from God* → *through Jesus* → *to all people of every nation!* And what is the call? "**...to the obedience that comes from faith.**" What does that mean? Lenski wrote: "... the obedience lies in the very act of believing and not in the category of