

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, August 16, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Well, That Stinks!”

READING: Romans 3:9-13a, 19-22 – What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit...” Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of the sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...

A week or so ago, Becky discovered a skunk in our swimming pool. It had fallen in and couldn't get out. It swam until exhausted and drowned. I found it in the skimmer basket. When I pulled it out, I was immediately enveloped by a cloud of stench that made me gag! My eyes watered. I tried to breathe through my mouth, but the stink of that skunk still assaulted my nose in a most grievous way. I ran to the garage for a shovel and a garbage bag. But the thing was so limp and wet it just rolled when I tried to shovel it up. Finally, I had no choice but to pick it up by its tail and drop it in the bag. The bag went into my trash can. It stunk that up, too. The next morning I finally buried the skunk deep in my garden. I also buried the bag, threw away a hat, a pair of gloves, and a T-shirt. All of them were forever tainted.

But what about me? I scrubbed and scrubbed in the shower. I shampooed my hair vigorously, twice! I used extra cologne. I did all I could to rid myself of the taint. And all that day I could smell that skunk on me! I don't think anyone else got close enough to me to be offended. I'm not sure it was all that noticeable to others, but I had skunk stuck in my nose all day! Not only that, but the two fingers I used to pick up that skunk by its tail smelled strongly of skunk for three days. Even pickle juice couldn't get rid of it! I just smelled pickled skunk! It was horrible! I could not rid myself of the odor – and that was just from the cloud of stink! Imagine if a skunk actually sprayed its musk on you! It would take forever to get rid of that stench.

St. Paul in our reading for today says all human beings STINK. All of us are tainted by the smell of sin which to God smells of death. And all people are in the same boat – Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Barbarians, men, women, children. There is no difference. Because the law holds all people accountable to God, and since no one, not one, can keep the law perfectly and completely at all times, all of us smell of sin, and we CANNOT RID OURSELVES of its stench. Try as we might, good intentions notwithstanding we stand before God sinful and unclean. We are that way by nature, and no amount of sacrifice, fasting, alms-giving, and do-gooding can cover the smell of our sin before God. We stink!

Just like the smell of that skunk on me, sin just clings to us. The very idea that we could by law-keeping be righteous and holy before God is ludicrous. That's the religion of the world. Every ancient religion, every modern religion, even within Christian circles, the idea persists that human beings can make themselves presentable to the gods or the universe by doing good works. St. Paul puts the lie to that idea by pointing out the truth: we cannot get the taint of sin off of us.

Our only hope is God's grace in Christ Jesus! By his perfect life, his sacrificial death, and his amazing resurrection, we receive a righteousness from God that comes through faith in Jesus. The stench of sin is

absorbed and obliterated by the mercy of God that is ours through the gift of his Son. By faith we can stand one day justified before God, not by what we've done but by what Jesus has done for us. It is a sweet fragrance life that comes from us because of what he did.

If I NEVER smell the scent of skunk again, it will be too soon! We had a fox terrier on the farm when I was a boy who cornered and tangled with a skunk. That dog was saturated with the spray. He stank for weeks and weeks after that. No way to get rid of it. No way to smell better. St. Paul says that left to our own devices we could never rid ourselves of sin and its smell of death. But thanks be to God and our Lord Jesus Christ, we will be a pleasing fragrance in God's nostrils when that day comes. Until then, we try to serve him in thanksgiving for all he has done and promised. We smell GOOD because of Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

Tomorrow evening *Grace on Wednesday* will kick off once again. Supper at 5:30. Classes 6-7:30. Encourage any parents you know to get their kids into these classes. And we'll have at least one adult class that starts that evening, too. Join us. It's one of the best ways for young and old to learn the stories and lessons of the Bible.