

Reformation

“The Heart of the Reformation is Justification by Faith”

Romans 3:21-26, 4:1-8

I'm glad to add my greetings to all the festivities in the joy of Reformation Sunday. Tonight, the theme will be also Reformation. We're going to look especially at James 5 and the part of God's will that we neglect. One of the ideas of the Reformation is the church is always looking to grow, never thinking that we have arrived. As Pastor Parks said a few moments ago, we are looking at the theme of the Reformation justification by faith and its implications today. If you like to know what's coming, it is justification - a necessary message and a disputed message. It's a biblical message shown in the heroes of the faith, Abraham and David. Above all, listen, I read as I read God's Word to you.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because his divine forbearance had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. What, then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather, according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what the Scripture say, Abraham believed God, and it was counted or reckoned to him as righteousness. Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as what is due to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly. His faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works, blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom God will not count his sin.

Let's pray for a moment. Lord, give us ears to hear what you're saying to us in this part of God's Word as we stand with the saints for generations, even centuries in the saints of this church, when we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

And I'll invite you to be seated.

One day, maybe 12 years ago, ten years ago, I was with my children, and I was telling my daughters, my three daughters how much I think of them, how excellent they were as children, and the remain excellent as adults. I said, of course, I know you squabbled and committed minor misdemeanors, but you know, you never did anything really bad.

And then there was a pause. And in that pause, my oldest child decided to speak. She confessed something that she'd been holding for many years. She said, well, dad, since you said I'd never do anything really bad, I think I should probably tell you that when you and mom are first going for a walk around the block, just a simple block.

I was ten, I was 11, or my youngest sister was four and then five. Sometimes when you walked around the block, I would tell Beth, mom and dad said, they're going around the block, but they're never coming back.

They've left us. And Beth would cry and she would comfort her little sister. She said, I did that so my sister would cry and I could comfort her. So stop saying I never did anything really bad. Well, she is a good person and she did feel guilty about that at least, and confessed that eventually she admitted that she is, like everybody else, a sinner and therefore in need of what we are studying proclaiming today, especially on Reformation Sunday, that we are right with God by faith alone, through grace alone, and not by any works that we bring.

Paul says this at the very beginning of Romans chapter one. So it'll be clear. He says, I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. It is the righteousness of God that's revealed from faith to faith. The righteous will live by faith. And then he says it again in the passage we read just now, as he gives the overture to the main section of Romans, he says, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from works, although on the prophets attests to it.

They bear witness to it that are righteous by faith in Jesus Christ comes to all who believe. So says Romans three. Both passages make it very clear that we're justified by faith, and immediately we need to explain something, because a few people think I'm right with God by my faith. But that's really not exactly true. It's not the whole truth.

Certainly, we're right with God through Christ, whom we lay hold of by faith. We're not saved by our faith. That would be a work two, would it not? We're right through Christ, by God's grace, and we lay hold of it. We apprehend it. We claim it by faith that rests on Christ. I have a very simple illustration. If you like chocolate milkshakes or vanilla or strawberry or any other flavor of milkshake, you have the milkshake and you have the straw or the spoon, and the milkshake itself is the substance and the straw.

The spoon is that by which you participate in or or gain the substance. Christ is the substance. Faith is like the straw or the spoon. We're not right with God because faith is meritorious, because we laid hold of Christ in that way. That's what Paul is saying. We're justified by faith in Christ. And that's necessary because all sin, no distinction, all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Now when we hear those words, we commonly think that Paul is just repeating himself. When the Bible repeats words changes a little bit. We're supposed to recognize that the same point is being made in two somewhat different ways. So when Paul says all sin,

he means all do what is wrong. Sin is the most generic term possible for doing what's not right, missing the mark, not hitting the target, not doing what's right.

Generic term. The second word is much more specific. All sinned and fall short of the glory of God means that we're supposed to be glorious. We're supposed to shine forth God's glory, God's beauty. We're supposed to. Paul says. Peter says they both say we're supposed to adorn the gospel, make it beautiful by our life. So if we make food, we should desire to make really good food, glorious food.

If we're putting up a building, we should desire to put up a great and grand building that really serves the needs of the people who are there. And maybe it has some esthetic sides to it as well. If we're writing code, we should write code that not only functions, but maybe even people say this sometimes code that's beautiful code that has something lasting in it.

For those who appreciate code, we aim for glory, not for the minimum. That's what Paul's saying. We fall short of that in many ways. Now, in many homes, people drink coffee in the morning and people drink coffee different ways. Sometimes a husband or wife sit down together and drink coffee and sometimes they drink it separately. I'm going to give you a mostly fictitious account of coffee drinking. There's a little bit of truth to it. Not much. Only the good parts are true. The bad parts are not true. It's not autobiographical. But, you know, some people do things like get up at 6:30 in the morning together and, and the husband and the wife pour a cup of coffee and they drink differently. Imagine that there's a woman who drinks her coffee at 6:30 and she drinks a cup straight down. It's done by 6:40. She goes about our business, has one more cup, and it's done by seven. Amen. That's the way you drink coffee. But she has a husband, and her husband pours 3 or 4, maybe at the very most five ounces. And he sips at tiny little sips and he makes four ounces of coffee. Last 2.5 hours, and it drives his poor wife crazy. This is not autobiographical. Much. It does take me a long time to drink four cups of coffee, but it doesn't drive my wife crazy. In case you're keeping score. But imagine that this woman starts to think that this man is just doing it wrong and starts to push him and needle him. And if he doesn't drink his coffee by 8:00, she's just going to grab that cup and finish it for him and pour it down the sink with a little bit of rebuke along the side. That would not be glorious. There's no law against pouring out coffee. It's not a sin to pour hot coffee, but it's not glorious to pour out coffee. What would be glorious is if the woman says, honey, I know you drink your coffee over and I have warmed it for you again, my beloved. Here's the coffee.

There's no law that says you have to do that, but it would be glorious to do so. God makes us for glory and we fall short. Two sins, two words for our problem sin and falling short of glory. And actually, three words describe what God has done. Jesus has offered himself as a propitiuous creation. That's a sacrifice for our sins, as a redemption and for our justification.

I'm just going to talk for a moment about redemption and mostly focus on justification. Redemption is an old word to redeem or to ransom. Two words say meaning is an old word that describes what God does in the world for us through an analogy. The analogy is someone who's in captivity in the ancient world, people were in Jesus' day.

People were ransom from two things being captured in war or otherwise captured. Pay a price to buy somebody out, or you could buy someone out of slavery. Pay a price to buy them out of slavery. That's what the word meant. Now, Jesus doesn't pay a literal price to anybody. The Bible says he paid the price of his own blood, which was poured out for us, and he redeems us from bondage.

Bondage to what? Bondage to sin, bondage to death. Bondage to God's punishment. And if that does set us free, Jesus liberates us from the bondage of sin as well as the penalty of sin. For example, if you meditate on the gospel, it's liberating. It liberates us from judgment, but it also liberates us from mistakes. For example, if you're constantly critical of other people, you could meditate on the mercy of Christ that saved you and become less critical.

Or if you are crippled by the quest for status that may or may not be coming your way, you could meditate on the fact that God has made you in his image and has liberated you from sin. So you're now his sons and daughters. The eternal redemption has redemptive features here and now. That's just a word about redemption.

I want to focus on justification. The word justification doesn't quite resonate the way it did a long time ago, because our society is less and less interested in righteousness. What do I mean by that? I mean, if you talk to people here and there, they're more interested. So often in social justice than in personal justice. They're more interested in what's going on in society out there than what's going on inside.

In my actions. It's also true that the interest in righteousness in many places is thinned out for something much smaller, something much weaker. Kindness or politeness. I'm not against being kind of polite, but a polite person can be very polite and ruthless or stab you in the back after they're done being polite. Politeness is not enough. Kindness is not enough.

Righteousness. Obedience to God is global. And if we're satisfied with kindness or making a good impression, we're never going to care properly about the problem of sin. And then, of course, there are the Marxists who long ago started to say that any lie, any theft, any deception, breaking of any treaty, any covenant is fine as long as it advances the glorious cause.

And there are people who have that approach today. They will lie, they will steal, they will cheat. They will accuse people falsely in order to gain an advantage because of the cause. And everything is fine if it's for the cause. And that's simply is not the way God sees the world. God says our personal acts matter and we should inspect ourselves and deal with the problem of sin.

Now, the Reformation came about in part because people were very mindful of sin. In the 15th century, Martin Luther stated his theses and started the Reformation 1517, 1518, 1520, and a few years before that, the world was very, very aware of the problem of sin. But they went about it a certain way. One of the main ways they went about it was to confess their sins as rigorously as possible, thinking that if they confess it all, God will forgive it all.

And they created books with hundreds of pages, and people would come to confessionals. Not the way we have it pictured in movies today, there wasn't a confessional booth that started a couple hundred years later on. They would. They would speak face to face with a priest or a monk, and the priests and monks would ask them question after question.

Page one, page two, page ten, page 20. A man named Jacob Strauss, who was relatively unknown, lightly known progenitor advocate of the Reformation, was the equivalent of the mayor of his city, Nurnberg, and he was pretty old when Luther started the Reformation, and he said, I praise God that I lived to see the day when justification by faith is proclaimed.

It a particular reason, he said in his city, the confessionals, have you committed this sin? And that sin and the other sinner that were intended to help people rigorously confess their sins, are actually schooling people in wickedness? As young boys and young girls and innocent men and women are being asked to do, commit this sin and this sin and this and this, and they're making sins enter the minds, people never would have thought of such sins as they're questioned about, in the hope that by confessing all their sins, they'd be right with God.

I understand the motive, but it's far, far from God's way. Paul describes God's ways specially in chapter four, verses one through eight, where the two examples of great. Here is the faith Abraham and David. Now Abraham was the father of Israel. The words are there for us. What? What shall we say was gained or discovered? It could be translated by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh.

He was the forefather of Israel. What did he learn? What did he know? He did not learn that were justified by works. He did not have a boast. Now he says, not a boast before God. He could have boasted before man. He did some pretty amazing things. You know, God said, follow me. I'm going to make your descendants as numerous as the sand of the seashore.

But I want you to leave your home, your people, and to give you a land, an inheritance, a covenant. And he did it. He was living in Iran, which is probably the most prosperous city in the ancient world at that time. They had second story running water. You think, well, that's normal. It wasn't then they had libraries with thousands of books.

You think, well, of course, no, no. In the biggest libraries in the world, walled city, safe from adversaries, prosperous. He left it all. He just walked out into the track was void

because God said, come, I'm going to build your people, your nation. I'll take care of you. And then. And then his nephew Lot was seized by barbarians, and he went and saved them.

And of course, he also walked again when he had that terrible journey with his son Isaac. Yes, he could have boasted about some things. In fact, at that time the Jews, the rabbis, the teachers at that time thought Abraham was the most righteous and faithful man who ever lived. And that statement, Abraham was justified by faith. They reinterpreted that statement found in Genesis 15.

They reinterpreted as Abraham was justified by his faithfulness, that is to say, by what he did, behold the works of Abraham. Now, of course, they missed a few things, right? They missed that he betrayed his wife not once, but twice, and betrayed, abandoned Hagar and Ishmael. They kind of forgot those parts of the story. They remembered the good things he did.

A little bit later, Paul talks about walking in the footsteps of Abraham, and those steps that he took were signs of faith. Okay, so even if you just count up all the good things that he did, does that make him right with God? Was he justified by his works? And the answer is no. Scripture says verse three, Abraham believed God and it was counted him as righteousness.

Now that statement does come from Genesis 15, and it occurred on a day when Abraham was at a low point. He didn't do anything notable that day at a low point, God said, Abraham, I'm your shield and your great reward. We have to talk about this briefly. A couple three weeks ago he said, I'm your shield and your great reward.

And Abraham said, really, if you're my shield and my great reward, what have you given me? You're my reward. I'm waiting for a son. This is what he said. Oh, Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless. You've been promising me a child. None have arrived. And my heir is my servant Eliezer of Damascus. He says it again.

You have given me no offspring. He says, I'm waiting. He complains bitterly against God. He says everything twice to make it clear. I'm not just saying, and I'm saying and I'm saying it again. He's almost rebuking God, complaining against God. And God says, let's go outside.

Look at the stars are numerous. They are. So shall your offspring be. It says simply Abraham, believe God, and it was reckoned or counted or imputed to him as righteousness. He had just been bitter in his speech toward God, but he believe God. It was reckoned as righteousness. He believe God, it was counted as righteousness. It was imputed to him as righteousness.

Paul goes on a case. We're not clear. He says, now look to the one who works. His wages are not counted as a gift, but as his do. If Abraham was saved by works, we wouldn't call it a gift. But God does call it a gift. Verse five. If you can pop it up there for a second, verse five, he goes on to say it again, in case you missed it, to the one who

does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, it can be translated God is the one who justifies the wicked.

His faith is counted as righteousness. Now I want to talk about this concept of counting as righteousness for a minute, and I'm going to go up with a story. I know it's football season, but we're going to have a baseball story now. And the story is one that some people know. There's a baseball team known as the Chicago Cubs, and they're one of the saddest and sorriest baseball teams the world has ever known.

In the year 1908, they won the World Series. And for the next 108 years, when for most of those years are only 16 teams playing baseball. So the odds are pretty good you'd find a way to get to the World Series and win one again for the next hundred and eight years. They didn't win a World Series and had losing seasons the vast majority of those years.

Boo Cubs. But then the year 2003 arrived and they had a good team, a very good team. They were four outs away from the World Series, their first success in more than a century. Two outs in the eighth inning, their head three. Nothing and a fly balls lifted down the left field line close to the line, and the outfielder was playing left field.

Moises was a good player, goes over and he sees the ball hooking, and so he jumps and he jumps into the stands. And about five other fans are also reaching for the ball because of course, somebody wants to have a ball and catch a ball, and one of the fans touched the ball and Alou couldn't quite catch it, and he made a face like those fans, don't they know?

And over the next ten minutes, the Cubs walked three batters, gave up two doubles, two singles and committed three errors, wild pitches, etc. and within ten minutes the score went from three nothing to eight three. They lost 8 to 3 and then lost the next day as well. And everybody blamed the fan who had come closest to touching that foul ball, as if he as if he led in the next eight runs.

That fan's name was Steve Bartman, and Steve Bartman was reckoned as an evil, monstrous sinner. Because of that deed, he suffered death threats. He had to work from home for years. And then, behold, 13 years after that, the Cubs won the World Series again, and the management of the Cubs remembered the plight of Steve Bartman and gave him a World Series ring and said, Steve Bartman has always been a loyal Cubs fan.

We count him as part of our family, and they embraced him in the celebration. Did he went, did he do anything to win the World Series? Of course not. But the team counted him as righteous as a baseball player and gave him a World Series ring. He was falsely counted. He was truly counted. And that's what God does with us.

God says you had no part in your redemption. You had no part in winning the World Series of Salvation, if I may say it that way. But because of your connection to Christ, you are counted, reckoned, viewed by God as righteous. You lay hold of that by faith.

God sees you as a righteous person. The greatest theologian, probably in American history, Jonathan Edwards, said this about justification.

He said, God has no regard to anything in the person justified or any goodness in him. God beholds an ungodly creature. The godliness in the person to be justified is never the ground of salvation. Now he goes on to say, what we know that doesn't mean our righteousness, our personal righteous, our practices are immaterial, our practices count, our behavior matters.

But it doesn't matter with regard to our standing with the Lord with regard to our eternal salvation. That's what he's saying now. The phrase God justifies the ungodly demands reflection. And people who struggle with the doctrine of justification by faith or even disagree with it, including formal Catholic theologians, say that when a Protestant says a person is righteous by faith and viewed as righteous because of faith, that the ungodly that God justifies the wicked.

When you say that you're making God into a liar, that is, you're saying that God says that people are righteous when they're not. I'm not saying every Catholic you meet, but I will say that formal Catholic theology confession says.

That God cannot and should not call wicked people righteous or sinful people righteous and Protestants. Answer from the Bible. We answer from Scripture and we say, you're forgetting the principle substitution. Jesus gave us his righteousness when Jesus went to the cross. He didn't just die for our sins. He also rose for our justification and gave us his righteousness, which is what the Lord sees when he beholds us.

Justification is a legal declaration, but not a legal fiction. Because when we trust in Christ, his righteousness is given to us once for all the moment we believe, but it's also given to us progressively as we follow him. Subsequently. Let me illustrate. I'm married. I'm married to my wife for over 40 years, and we've been hanging out for the vast majority of our adult lives.

And so we influence each other. You might say we're united. And because of that union, people ascribe the qualities of one of us to the other. So, for example, some of you have asked and when I was a pastor for a longer period of time, people would ask my wife, Debbie, theological questions, and you could ask, well, why would they ask?

You know, why would they ask her one and ask the pastor? Well, women feel more comfortable talking to woman sometimes, and they, they kind of think, well, you know, she's been hanging around with Dan all these years and he's a theologian and she's intelligent, which he is. And, you know, she learns, she studies and she reads books and she hears sermons.

She remembers them and so forth. And so she should know some theology to very good. And then the other thing that happens is that people sometimes think I'm a friendly person because I hang out with my wife and I'm not necessarily friendly person,

but people see who I spend my time with. And I will tell you just a couple things about my early life.

When I was 21, 22, new Christian, and talking to Debbie about life and the way we conduct ourselves, I would not. I said, I refuse to talk to people about the weather. It's a dead end. Nobody can do anything about it. You say, oh, 82 degrees. It shouldn't be that hot and there's no substance to it. I refuse to waste my breath and waste my time talking about the weather.

And she would say to me things like, I remember this. I'm 22 years old. She's 20, you know, 21 Dan. They're just trying to be friendly. You should talk to them about the weather. And I said, you know, that might be a good point. Maybe I should talk about the weather. And when I was at that same stage, I was always carrying, a textbook with me.

I was always carrying a book about Greek or Hebrew or Latin, just carrying it all the time from the checkout line. I'm opening up my Greek or my Latin, read a little bit if I'm. If I'm in a red light, if I'm wherever we are, I'm just. I'm just weird Latin or Greek a lot. And if I got in an elevator, I'd think to myself, this is a great chance to review some Latin or some Greek and, and ignore the person on the elevator.

You're a human. I'm a human. I always wanted to say this actually said it once. You're a person, I'm a person. Let's go about our business. Now, as we go up the elevator. And my wife said, no, you really shouldn't do that. You should be more friendly. And by virtue of my union with my wife, I slowly became a more friendly person.

Now, I am not talking about my marriage here. I'm talking about our connection to Jesus. Because when we first are united to Christ, when we first believe in him, his traits are not our traits. But slowly, by living with him, by studying His word, by meditating on him, we become more and more like him so that what was once false of us, that we're righteous.

It was only true because Christ righteousness is imputed slowly becomes true. God makes it true. John Murray said, I said it this way if I can find the quotation, God causes the righteous state that he declares, at first he changes our heart, changes our status, and then he changes our way of life. Now Jesus says this in one place.

He says, by your words you will be justified, and by your word you'll be condemned. Not that your words earn your salvation, certainly not. But your words give proof or evidence that you indeed do belong to Christ. It is not a fiction that it's true. It's true that we belong to Christ. We see it when we change, when the gap between God's Word, this man, this woman, this child is righteous, you know, smaller and smaller we become.

We become the people. Jesus says that we are. We become like Christ. Now, the Reformation. The Reformation rests on some experiences. Talk about those in a minute. But the Reformation word rests above all on the word that Paul declares about Abraham. He believed God was reckoned as righteousness, and the word that is also declared about David. That's verses six, seven and eight.

Because if Abraham was not justified by works, it's also true that David was not condemned by his evil deeds. Verses six, seven and eight say, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. And I want you to look at exactly the way he's quoting Psalm 32. Psalm 32 was written by David after his great sin.

Now we all know that David was a man of faith and did great things. He defended the people of Israel. He received the covenant promises. He ruled in justice. He was merciful to descendants of Saul. He was a great and godly man. Wrote 71 or 7273 of our Psalms. He's a wonderful man, and he threw it all over in a preposterous outpouring of sin.

When he reached middle age, he desecrated the crown. He violated God's law. He scorned and ravaged God's people. And he didn't repent for months. And then finally, the prophet Nathan confronted him, told a story about what he'd done, and said, you are the man. David said, I've sinned against the Lord. And the prophet said, the Lord has taken away your sin.

Done. Now he bore some temporal consequences, but his sin was gone. It was wiped out. David, or a Psalm about it. Psalm 32. And David and his Psalm are quoted here. Blessed are those could be translated. Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven. What David did with Bathsheba was a transgression, a pile of transgressions, theft and lust and adultery and murder and lying.

Blessed are ever, he says to the world, blessed are those. Blessed is everyone whose transgressions, whose overt manifest desecration is the law, are forbidden, blesses everybody whose sins are covered. And then he said, and blessed is the man. That is to say, you all need to know it. You all know this. Your sins and transgressions are covered, and know this one by one.

Blessed is the man, the individual Jew singular. Sitting there. Sins can be covered, forgiven, never counted against you. This is hard for people to take in. It gets lost. Martin Luther, who started the Reformation, humanly speaking, lived in a time when this was lost. As a young man, he struggled mightily with the problem of sin I mentioned earlier people try to confess their sins.

Luther tried to confess our sins. He became a monk so he could have regular opportunities to confess our sins and to do good things to wipe out his misdeeds. He lived in fear of God's judgment. That's why he became a monk. But he was such a dedicated monk, such a godly monk, such a such an intent and gifted monk that he was quickly made into a priest and that terrified him.

He said, who am I to touch sacred things, the sacraments? Who am I to lift up my eyes or my hands to divine majesty? I'm quoting his words here. He tried to pray. He tried to be good enough to please God. This is what he wrote. I was such a good monk. I kept

the rules of my order so strictly that I may say that ever, if ever, a monk got to heaven by his monk, it would have been I.

If I'd kept on any longer, I would have killed myself with vigils, prayers, fasting, and other work. He knew he couldn't be good enough, and so he went to what was offered next by the church in that day. Go on a pilgrimage, because you see the saints of old have so many good deeds, they don't need them anymore.

And if you go to where a pilgrim died, or where they maybe have the bones or the clothes of a of a of a great saint of old, if you go on a pilgrimage showing how sincere you are, you can get the righteousness of the pilgrim. And so he took the greatest pilgrimage of all. He went to Rome.

He traveled from northern Germany on foot to Rome. When he got there, he did everything you're supposed to do. He prayed and said masses. And they said, there's, there's another. There's another step you can take. You can crawl up the steps of Saint Peter's Cathedral on your knees. And every step, every time you go up with your knees, say the Lord's Prayer.

And he did it. And he got to the top step. And he said, I wonder if it's true. Why would this? Why would this suddenly please God? Crawling on my knees? And so he meditated. Meditate on the words, the righteous will live by faith, the righteous will live by faith. He says in one place he meditated on those words for six months until he realized that the righteous who live by faith are not those who have their own righteousness, but those who are righteous because of the work of Christ.

It's the righteousness that God gives us that makes us right where the Lord. And once we have that, we live lives of joy and gratitude. I said it before, and I'm going to say it again the end of this passage, Romans four has a little phrase that we who believe should also walk in the footsteps of Abraham. Again, Abraham's life was one of walking.

He walked to rescue Lord. He walked with his son Isaac. He walked away from his city because God told him to. We walk in the footsteps. We learn when we walk in footsteps a few years ago, my family went, hiking in the sand dunes of Michigan. You may know that they're pretty big. They're pretty substantial. And, six of us, Debbie and me and my oldest daughter and her husband and their two children were walking at the time that our youngest grandson was, was, almost three. And so he was carried most of the way and his sister was five and change.

And at that point she was very enamored of me. She would say things on one occasion she said, Papa, wherever you are, that's where I want to be. It's pretty nice. And she practiced it so that on that walk, a lot of the time she was with me. And it's hard to go up sand dunes. You take a step and you go up three feet and you go down one and a half or two feet.

And so I saw that she was struggling. And so I start to dig my feet in to the sand to make a little ledge for her, for little feet not too big of a ledge. And after a little while she

said, Papa, it's so much easier when I walk in your footsteps. And I said, that's right. It is.

And then maybe we talked about Abraham a little bit and how God gives us footsteps to walk in. That walk does not get us right with God. And if we stray a bit and miss those footsteps, we're still right with God by faith. But if we do trust in him, we do want to follow those steps that he gave us, because the Lord loves us and wants us to obey him and follow him in the mundane aspects of life as well.

And so there's this unity between what God does objectively outside of us, giving us righteousness by faith in Christ alone, through grace alone. But what he says about us, that we are righteous and right with him, he slowly makes true by our faith, our union with Christ, as we walk in the footsteps not just of Abraham, but the footsteps of Christ our Savior and our Lord.

Let's pray for a minute.

Heavenly father, I do ask that we would walk in those footsteps not because we have some dream that if we do enough, that's good. We'll be right with you. That's not possible. You justify the ungodly and that is us. But you also do make true slowly, progressively, never perfect in this life. But you do make true what you say about us.

And so, Lord, we do want to walk with you first of all, and joy and gratitude in faith, but then also in the ordinary acts of life with our family or friends or collaborators or clients, whatever we do. So, Lord, we ask that you would give us grateful hearts, that you give us believing hearts, and you would give us more of your spirit so that we can walk with you in the footsteps of Abraham.

We ask in your name. Amen.