

Pastor Brian's
Mid Week Message
December 16, 2020

"I'VE GOT NOTHING!"

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. Romans 7:18

Kay and I have for a long time joked that there would come a day when one or both of us would stand before the congregation and say, "sorry folks, I've got nothing for you today". This was back when she would most Sundays give the children's sermon, then a hymn would follow, after which I would get up to preach. Well folks, that day may finally come today, at least for me. I'm not getting up to preach, at least not yet (that comes a bit later on this evening) but as I sit at my computer, I'm having a hard time coming up with the devotional topic that typically precedes this weekly update. The busier pace of the Advent Season doesn't allow for as much time for me to come up with a "witty topic" on which to write. Well that just might be my problem, relying on my wit and intellect (as limited as they both are) rather than relying on the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that works in that proclamation to win the day. The Apostle Paul was writing about a slightly different topic in the verse above, that is of his inability to obey God's perfect law with his own reason and strength, but it just might apply here too, to me. Of myself I can produce nothing good, nothing of any real value before God and before you. The prophet Isaiah (you remember him don't you...he's kind of the center of our Advent theme this year) writes, "*We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.*" (Isaiah 64:6) Notice that he's (God is) writing about all of us, not just me. As if that makes me feel any better. The message here is that when we're on our own, apart from the power of God in the Holy Spirit in us, there is nothing that we can do or produce that merits anything before God, that will please Him. It's just the opposite. Everything we do of ourselves is disgusting and detestable to our God. At our very core we're sinners. Sin is who we are, and sin is what we do. We're never going to fix that. A lot of today's churches and pastors don't want to tell anyone that anymore. It's just too negative and people don't want to hear it, and as result they also won't want to be part of our congregation if we preach that. Yes, this is not a topic that is meant to make people feel good about themselves. It may not be what people want to hear but it is most certainly what people NEED to hear! The eternal truth is that we are sinners and cannot free ourselves from this sinful condition. That sin leads to eternal damnation and punishment in hell. (I'm sure you've heard about that place) An even bigger eternal truth is that we don't have to. God has sent His Son into the world to set us free and that work has already been accomplished. That's what Christmas (you've heard of that too I'm assuming) is all about. It's about God invading time and space, the universe and the world, in the person of Jesus Christ, both true God and true man, to snatch us from the grips of our enemy the devil and to deliver us back into God's eternal family and kingdom. The incarnation and nativity are Christ's first steps on that journey, a journey that comes to its climax in the cross and empty tomb; His death and resurrection. Because of all that Christ, from the time He was a teeny tiny baby and even an embryo, did for us God offers us the free gift of His undeserved favor for the sake of Jesus. He earned...earned it for us. We receive this gift in humble faith, and as we receive it we also receive the Spirit of God that comes to dwell within us. It's through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can produce righteous acts before God and offer them to our neighbors. They still don't win for us salvation, but again, they don't have to, we already have that, but they are most certainly pleasing to God our Father. So once again...I have to apologize to you today. I've got nothing for you. But God does!