

“3 times “how?”” Romans 10:8-13

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

If only, if only we could hear these promises as for the first time, when what they say really sinks in. How liberating they are! How unbelievably great! Just listen: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, will be saved.”

Everyone who believes that Jesus Christ is the Lord and confesses it, they will be saved. Whoever you are, whatever you have done, whatever your life has been like up to that moment. You will be saved... just like that!

Saved... but what does that actually mean? How would you explain it to others? What does it mean “you will be saved”? What language, what illustrations would you use? Because the Bible speaks about it in many different ways.

You are saved, meaning, you are forgiven, all your sins and guilt and shame are washed away and you are covered with the glory of Christ, you are reconciled with God the Father, there is peace and acceptance in your relationships.

You are redeemed and freed from the slavery to sin and idols, to devil and death. You are cleansed, you are restored, you are a new creation and, don't forget – also all the incredible future promises are yours, New Heavens and New Earth, life with God, reigning with Jesus forever.

We can put it also this way, we are not only saved from – from all the bad stuff, but we are also saved for – for all the good stuff. For this new life, Christian life, where Jesus Christ is your Lord, and where you are His own people.

But what does this mean, that Jesus is our Lord? Let's reflect on three questions and they should help us to articulate for ourselves, and also for others, what it means to be a Christian and to live with Jesus as our Lord.

Let's meditate on these three “how”. **First**, how has, or how does our God bless us? **Second**, how is He going to bless us? And the **third**, how will He bless others through us?

The answer to the first one is obvious, and even if we wanted to list all the things how He has blessed us and how He does bless us, that would be a very, very long list. This bountiful planet Earth, where we dwell in peace and security, surrounded by incredibly abundance of God's gifts, while this planet

races through the terribly cold, uninhabitable space with the mind-boggling speed of more than 100K per hour. As we sit here, protected, sheltered, cared for and provided for as if none of that was happening.

We were given parents to bring us into this world and to care for us, we have been given life and we still keep receiving it. Our bodies and souls and all our senses. Our daily bread, and all the marvels and miracles that surround us.

Besides, and this is so important in this confusing age – you know *who you are*. Yes, you are created in the Image and Likeness of the Triune God, to represent Him, to imitate Him, and thus you are endowed with infinite worth and dignity.

More than that, you are redeemed, from certain death and condemnation, not with gold or silver, but with the innocent sufferings and death of the Son of God, so that you could be His own; this is how much you matter to Him.

And now, you are sanctified, the Holy Spirit indwells in you and renews you, He transforms you from one degree of glory to another, to be more and more like Jesus Christ, our Lord. This is who you are. God's creation and His child. Precious, valued, loved, protected, cared for, embraced.

And even more, you also know *why you are* here. You know what the purpose, the meaning and the direction of your life are, and we will talk about that more in details later. You also know your destiny, your final destination. New Heavens and New Earth, new resurrected bodies, beautiful and glorious!

This is how your Lord has blessed you. This is how He daily keeps blessing you. How can we ever thank Him enough! If only we truly believed it, we would be the most joyful people in the whole world...

But and this is also something we all know and have experienced. Not always, not even too often everything goes well in this life. Any day we may get nasty surprises, tragic and unexpected events, unpleasant and dangerous situations.

Death, breakups, terminal sicknesses, accidents, job losses, pandemics, and yes, now even a full-scale war with totally unpredictable development. All of that contrary to what we may want, or plan or choose, if we were asked.

How do we react when something like that happens? How do we feel in those circumstances? What do we want to ask? Yes, quite often this outcry just comes from our disturbed or broken hearts – why? Why me? Why this? Why did this happen to the person that I love so much? Why?!

Did you notice where the focus is in all these questions? Of course, it is on me. If we have a bad conscience, if we have knowingly chosen to continue in our sins, if we haven't repented and turned away from them, we may fear...

"Is God angry with me? Is He punishing me for that?" If that is our reaction, then, of course, the first step is to get on our knees, to repent, to ask for God's forgiveness either in the Divine Service, or even better in private confession.

Our Father gladly forgives us and gives us peace. But at the same time, we, as His chosen people, we need to remember that nothing, hear it! nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Even more, He promises that everything will work together for good for those who love God.

For good? But then, what is good? What I want? My way? My plans? My hopes? Or is it something else? Do I even know what is good for me? We know that the ultimate good is to be with our Lord Jesus Christ, to see Him as He is and to finally witness all His incredible promises come true.

If we keep this understanding of the ultimate good in mind, that shapes what good we expect when we cry out in the midst of our troubles: “Jesus, how will you bless me through this?” Will He bring me closer to Himself?

Will He make me humbler? Will He make me more trusting? Will He destroy my idols and bring my hidden sins into the light and purify me? Will He strengthen my faith? Will He give me a deeper experience of His presence?

That is what is truly good for us. You may remember the name of pastor Tim Keller. I have mentioned him before. He has a cancer, for a second time, this time a very aggressive kind of cancer. Not much time left for him in this life.

So, he was asked in an interview, how does he cope with all of that. You know what he said? He said that he has always proclaimed that God comes to us in our sufferings, and that he himself, of course believed it. Intellectually...

But now, he said, he has experienced God’s gracious and wonderful present to such a degree, that he ... would not want to return to where He was before. His experience of God presence was such, that now he feels more blessed than ever. His gracious and faithful God has blessed him even in that situation.

“Jesus, how will you bless me?” When we ask this, we face gracious God, we entrust ourselves into His strong and loving hands. Everything is different. Instead of despair and fear, we are filled with trust and hope.

Humble, open and keenly waiting for the new thing that the Lord will do in our lives. “Jesus, how will you bless me?” This was the second question that defines us as Christians. This is how we live and trust when Jesus is our Lord.

Now, the third question. Remember what it was? “Jesus, how will you bless others through me? How will you use me with everything you have entrusted to me to bless every person whom you have placed in my life?”

When we confess that, yes, Jesus Christ is my Lord, we are saved. We are not saved to return back to our old ways, we are not saved to remain in our sins. We are not saved to ignore Jesus and the community of His saints and the grand world-wide mission that He has entrusted to us.

It is so insane to state: “I know that I am forgiven, I don’t need to do anything, I can go about my life as I wish.” Just think about it! What is sin, what is our

sinful condition? It is like a deadly sickness; it is a slavery to evil forces from which we can't free ourselves. It is being in enmity with our Creator. If you are cured from a terminal disease, who would want to be sick again? If we are freed from oppressive captors, who would want to return to them? One obvious answer is – those who don't want to have Jesus as their Lord.

So, we are saved not only from, we are also saved for. For beautiful, adventurous and fulfilling lives. To love our neighbours, and to serve all the people in our lives with everything we are and with everything we have.

Thus, as Christians, as those who confess that Jesus is our Lord, we are to live with this question at the back of our mind: "How can Jesus use me to bless this person? And what about that person? And what about all those people?"

We already mentioned that the greatest blessing is when someone through us would receive the gift of eternal life, there is nothing greater. That is our primary reason of being as Christ's Church. But also, of course, we are to help everyone in every bodily need. In deeds and in words.

Encouraging them, supporting them with God's wisdom, blessing them and praying for them. Just imagine what the world would look like, if everyone, everyone! transformed by the Holy Spirit, would live that way?

Every day and in every relationship asking: "How can you bless them through me?" And you know what? This is what is coming for us. This is where we are heading. This is what our future will be like, and more.

But for now, let's rejoice, for you have been chosen, you have been called, Jesus has made you His own, you have been given this new life, as a priceless gift. Therefore, yes, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, all those who call upon the name of Lord, who confess that Jesus Christ is our Lord, may the Holy Spirit help you to lead every day guided by these three simple questions.

May He fill you with contentment and gratitude as we contemplate on: "How has He blessed us?" May He fill you with peace and trust and hope, when we cry out in the midst of this unpredictable life: "Jesus, how will you bless me?"

And may He fill you with joy and excitement and satisfaction as we inquire: "How will you use me to bless all these people?"

May this be what your Christian life looks like. Day in and day out. Until that triumphant moment, that long-awaited day of glory, when you will finally receive the ultimate good, when you will see your Lord Jesus Christ as He is.

Amen.