

+Julian Dobbs- Sunday Afternoon

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 June 2019

Preacher: Bishop Julian Dobbs

[0:00] Thank you very much for listening to me again. At least they provide you with food in this church when you have to listen to the bishop twice in one day.

So I hope that will be helpful. We're talking about article number 11 today. I'm going to read it to you. It's on the sheet there. You'll find it helpful, I think, to follow through in these outlines. It's 20 after 12, if that clock is correct. And I'll try and get this through as quickly as I can. Let's have a look at the article. We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith.

And not for our own works or deservings. Whereof that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort as more largely is expressed in the homily on justification.

If you think, what the heck does that mean? Well, I'm going to try and help you understand it. All Protestant Christians and churches at the point of the Reformation, when there was a separation because of the Reformation from the teachings of the Church of Rome, produced doctrinal standards to explain why there had been a separation.

[1:25] And I'm doing something very dangerous, keeping my eye on the time. I am diverging from my notes. I just talked about separation. I believe there are only very few reasons in the Bible for Christians to separate ourselves from one another.

Now, many of us feel we don't like the pastors preaching, the church is too noisy, there are too many children, they don't have good coffee, it's not warm enough in the winter, the sermon should be shorter, the service should start at 9.30 and not 10.30.

Those are not reasons that the Bible gives to separate yourself from one another. Regrettably, many of the times Christians do separate themselves from one another.

It is for those reasons, my canon theologian uses the phrase, without biblical cause. There are reasons, there are biblical reasons to separate from one another, and the doctrine of the justification of man is one of them.

And it's one of the main reasons why the Reformation happened. Where there is wrong teaching in the church, that is another reason the Bible gives where we can separate ourselves from one another.

[2:36] I might say, in faith, that Deacon Steele and I and one of the priests in our diocese are working on a new Anglican Diocese of the Living Word podcast series.

Can I announce this, Mark? We haven't done it yet. The very first one we think we will do are the biblical reasons for Christians to separate themselves from one another.

And you might study the Bible. I think there are four. You might find more, but I think there are four. But we'll get back to the text. So we're at the 39 articles. There was a reason to separate from the doctrine of the day.

And the 39 articles arose out of a desire to explain both the commitments of the English Reformation, the Church of England, and the areas of the teaching they had departed from. You've looked at 10 articles. You've looked at the nature of God. You've looked at Scripture. You've looked at the predicament of man. I think that was your article, Mark.

[3:38] We find ourselves in Article 11, which takes us to the very heart of the Reformation from the 16th century. And it's why the articles are still important for us today.

The same priority is seen in the homilies. I'll come back to that. And the homily on justification. I'll mention that as well. Archbishop Cramner.

I quoted him in my sermon this morning. Archbishop from the 16th century who was burned at the stake along with other bishops at various times and other Anglican reformers saw this article as

critical to the doctrine for all Christians.

In fact, the homily, the sermon, which this article talks about, says this. And I'm going to quote. It says, This is the strong rock and foundation of Christian religion, the justification of man.

So much of whatsoever denieth is not to be accounted for a Christian man. So this is a primary doctrine. To deny it is not to be a Christian at all.

[4:44] That's what the reformers were teaching. It was very serious for them. This is a serious doctrine. It's at the heart of the reformation. If you deny it, they said, you're not a Christian at all.

So that should make us sit up and listen and have another sip of our coffee. Make sure we're all awake. And the article is at pains to stress. It's not an article that should frighten us.

Do you notice the words that the article uses? It's an article that should bring us great comfort. Even though it's so very serious and to deny it would make you not a Christian at all.

It's an article that brings us great comfort. And I'll come back to that. At the time of the reformation, the church of Rome taught that the grace of God came in a variety of ways.

It was infused into the soul of the believer. And then the believer, after that infusion, cooperated with God by living a holy life.

[5:43] And on the final day, the believer would be judged, justified by God on the basis of that grace and on the basis of good works achieved in cooperation with grace. It was also taught that the basis for justification in the life of the believer, which will be good enough if grace has been received and the believer has worked hard enough.

Now, I'm careful about using that phrase. But it's been working hard enough doing very good things. So things the church of Rome were asking people to do, they weren't all bad. They were very good things.

They talked about prayer and repentance. Some of them were not so good. But a lot of them were very good. But nevertheless, there came a separation. And we have this justification of man and this very serious doctrine that brings us teaching.

So we have the church of Rome at the time of the reformation through the council of Trent teaching one thing. And we have the reformers, such as Archbishop Cramner and others, teaching what is reflected in this article.

And in it, we need to reference some scriptures. So I want to read to you from the word of God. Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 8. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul, talking about how we are justified.

[7:03] He says, For by grace you have been saved through faith. Notice that. And this is not your own doing. So there's a reference to it.

It's not been about good deeds. I'm going to talk about good deeds, but not in relationship to our faith. He says, This is not your own doing. How is it that we're saved? It is the gift of God, not as a result of works.

Thanks be to God. Why? So that none of us can boast how very good we are. None of us are good. We are all sinners, all deserving of hell. Have a look on your outline there.

I'm going to ask the question. I want you to respond with the answer if you would. Saved how? Say it with me. By grace through faith.

Do we save ourselves? No. It is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one can boast.

[8:01] You see, if we saved ourselves, and if we saved ourselves by doing good works, how would we ever know when we had done enough? I mean, how many of the commandments would you have to keep?

You tell me. Would it be 5 out of 10? What would it be? 10 out of 10? 6 out of 10? 7 and a half out of 10? I mean, what would it be? It would be all of them. And not just those 10.

The Old Testament has 316 mitzvah or commandments. You have to keep all of them. That's impossible. It's only been possible for one person to do it, and his name is Jesus.

So it is by grace we have been saved through faith in Christ alone. Not by working out good works. The good works are important. And I'll come to that in a moment.

But they're not important as far as our salvation is concerned. And therein lies the difference. St. Paul says that all works have to be excluded from our justification so that no one can boast.

[9:04] There's the passage in Ephesians. Doing good works for salvation, listen, robs Jesus of the glory that is his. It is in essence saying, if we have to do good works and add them to what

Christ did on the cross, then what he did on the cross was not sufficient.

It wasn't good enough. And that we would have to do something to add to his salvific work on the cross to make our lives right and good. And the article says, look, we are accounted righteous before God.

How? Only by the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith and not of our own works or deservings.

So it's very, none of this is rocket science. It's very clear. But it does offend us, doesn't it? Because we like to think of ourselves as good people. Good people doing good works, helping the old lady across the road, carrying in the groceries for someone who's struggling at Wegmans, and thinking all of that will make us more like Christ and we'll get into heaven.

You think about it yourselves. We do this by default. A relative dies. They may not have ever gone to church. You go to the funeral and you hear these wonderful testimonies.

[10:23] That's how you say that word, by the way. Wonderful testimonies. Say it with me.

Testimonies. That wasn't good enough. Wonderful testimonies. Ah, testimonies.

Of their glorious and good lives. The minister stands up the front and he says they were such good people. And they probably were very good people. But their goodness throughout their lives as far as their salvation is concerned, at that moment of death, helps them not at all.

Not of our own works or deserving. The article talks of a homily. Homilies were written to be read in conjunction with the articles to give us a better and more broad understanding of the doctrine of the church.

The article that's referenced here directs us to the homily on justification where Archbishop Cramner makes clear in the first place that every person is guilty of sin before God, so that every person of necessity is constrained to seek another righteousness.

We are all guilty. We need a righteousness. Where does that righteousness come from? Not from doing our good deeds. It comes from Christ alone.

[11:43] And I hope you're beginning to journey with me to the place where being told that you are a hell-deserving sinner is actually something of great comfort. Because in the comfort, you see, you need to be justified.

We've learned that we can't be justified by doing good works because we would never know when we had done enough. We are justified by Jesus Christ alone.

We are incapable of doing what Christ has done for us. First, He came to fulfill the law. I think we might have this, yes, in the notes there.

He came to fulfill the law. When we put our faith in Christ, we are brought into a relationship with Christ that Martin Luther calls a marriage. A beautiful marriage.

Christ's righteousness becomes ours. And our sin is put on Him. His righteousness becomes ours.

[12:44] We pay nothing for it. He gave His life for it. And our sin is taken from us and put on Him. And then secondly, by the shedding of His most precious blood on the cross, He made a sacrifice.

And He made it a sacrifice of satisfaction. Let me unpack that. This is very important. The guilt of our sin needed to receive the punishment of death.

And Christ, standing in our place, took the full anger of God at all of our sin and paid the full penalty for our sin. And therefore, the reformers of the church, Cramner and others, saw Paul's statement that no man is justified by the works of the law, for it is only by the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Christ came. Christ came. He fulfilled the law for us. Secondly, by the shedding of His blood, He made a sacrifice of satisfaction. So this doctrine, it's a holy doctrine.

It preserves the honor of Christ. What Christ accomplished on the cross, that beautiful, holy sacrifice He accomplished is preserved in this doctrine.

[14:06] Because nothing more is needed. Only what God, only what Christ accomplished on the cross. And it's preserved in this great doctrine.

So, what then must we do as Christians? What is our response to this doctrine? And again, Archbishop Cramner is very careful at this point.

On the one hand, it affirms that a truly justified person will not be idle. Rather, we will render ourselves unto God's holy will, with all our will and our heart and our might and our power, to serve Him in good deeds, obeying His commandment during our lives.

We do the good deeds, not to earn the salvation, but we do the good deeds in response to the salvation that has been freely given.

So we help the old lady across the road. We take the groceries at Wegmans. We take the broom and the shovel after church. We stack up the chairs. We serve in the kitchen. Not because that's going to earn us a place in heaven, but it's going to be the outworking of Christ who is at work in our lives through the sacrifice He made on the cross.

[15 : 21] Our deeds may indeed be good. Remember, they are never good enough to take the place of Christ on the cross. And even faith itself.

Often people say, I have to have faith to receive Christ's work, but even faith is not a good work. It is only, remember, we see this in the article, by the merits of what Jesus did on the cross, we can claim the promises of Christ for ourselves.

So how then is this a doctrine full of comfort? We're wicked, horrible, naughty, nasty, evil people. Sinful. I mean, just look at Mark. But he's a child of God.

Redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. So how do those two things come together? What is this doctrine of comfort? Because the believer in Jesus can have total assurance of salvation before God.

Not having to work hard and try harder and do more. And as a result, we are comforted by Christ. Remember in our Anglican liturgy.

[16 : 32] We didn't do so this morning. I'll have to have a word with your rector. But we didn't do so this morning. We have what is referred to as the comfortable words. Remember that?

Those of you who are Anglicans, you'll know it. The comfortable words. They're included because they are comforting. Now, regrettably, this is your bishop speaking.

I've told the clergy this. Regrettably, we tend to... Bishop Dave was there when I did this with the College of Bishops in our new Anglican Church in North America. We were running the risk of making a serious error.

And that error was we were going to make the comfortable words optional. And your bishop put up his hand and he said, How can the comfort of Christ ever be optional? And so, we came to a point of negotiation.

The negotiation was, on one hand I was saying, All the comfortable words must be read every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper. Which, in fact, is Archbishop Cremner's position, just by the way, in case there's anybody listening who needs some correction.

[17 : 37] The bishops agreed, well, sometimes we can't do all of them. But we'll always do at least one of them. We didn't do it this morning, but you're getting them now. So, in a sense, we've done them this morning.

And I want to look at them, because they're words of great comfort. They're on the screen there. And the word comfort comes from a Latin word, which means confirmo. We're confirming something.

The comfort means something has been confirmed in you. What has been confirmed? And the assurance that Christ has paid and done. All that is necessary for your salvation.

And as a result, you are justified. I think, do we have the comfortable words there somewhere? Are they on the sheet? They may not be. Okay. Okay.

You see there, the portion about the comfort. Let me read them to you. And journey with me, because they take you on a journey. Come to me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[18 : 37] So, Jesus, what's he doing? He is inviting us to come to him. Journey with me. When we come to him, we recognize that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son to the end.

But all that believe in him, here we go, here comes the comfort, should not perish, but have eternal life. We hear words from St. Paul, which is worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Are you feeling the comfort? That's why we call them the comfortable words. We hear from St. John. If any man sins, here's the good news.

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. Would you say that word with me? Propitiation.

It's a very important word. The inclusion of the word propitiation, which is a very hard word to say, and it can make it hard to grasp the meaning of what that means.

[19 : 41] But to propitiate means to avert God's anger by the offering of a sacrifice. Jesus is the propitiation of our sins.

His sacrificial offering of himself on the cross of Calvary not only takes away our sin, it also appeases and transforms God's wrath into forgiving love.

He is the propitiation of our sins. Thank God. And as a result, we're comforted. Because there's nothing we need to do.

We are comforted. Propitiation is first and foremost an act of God. In non-Christian religions and pagan religions, the deities are propitiated by their followers.

And it's the followers who offer the sacrifices. You see that if you've ever been to Southeast Asia.

And you see in Buddhism, the appeasing of the gods of Hinduism being offered various gifts.

[20 : 45] If you go into some Chinese restaurants and restaurants from particularly Southeast Asia, you'll see appeasements being offered to the gods in a corner of the restaurant so that the gods don't incur wrath upon you.

But with Christ and with Christianity, it's different. In the Christian religion, the entire work of salvation is accompanied by God in Christ.

And that's very good news. It's spiritually comforting. Next time, because your priest will have them every time in the liturgy from now on. They're comfortable words.

It's all, I'm teasing with them. It's all very good news and spiritually comforting. And the next time you hear those words, the next time you hear them, thank God in your hearts for the loving kindness of God.

For the sacrifice of Jesus that brings you comfort. And it's one of the reasons why in the liturgy we have those words before we receive Holy Communion. We come, our sins are confessed, absolution is declared by the priest or the bishop, and we hear comfortable words that bring us to the place of being able to come in great comfort, without fear, to receive the body and blood of Jesus.

[21 : 58] Okay, to finish, how are we doing in time? To finish, five statements about Article 11 and five implications. And you've got them there on the piece of paper.

You can take them away and look at them. Statement number one, all out of this article. To be justified is to be declared judicially righteous by God.

That's the first statement. What's the implication for us? Until human beings come to see that they are sinners before a holy God to whom they are accountable and before whom they stand condemned, the doctrine of justification will seem irrelevant and irrational and offensive.

To be told you are a hell-deserving sinner is offensive. But in justification by faith, amazing as it is, God declares us sinners to be right in His sight.

And it's a beautiful thing. That's the first thing. You're judicially righteous and declared such by God.

Here's the second one. We are not justified in the eyes of God due to our own works of deserving.

[23 : 02] Only in Christ is the implication we will find right-standing reconciliation and fellowship with God. Remember the great words of the hymn writer?

Nothing in my hands I bring. Sing it with me. Simply to your cross I cling.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, that great hymn of the faith. Written by the author when he was taking shelter in the cleft of a rock after a terrible storm.

The storm was passing over. Thought he was going to lose his life. It's a great hymn of doctrine.

Have a look at it sometime. One of the verses, Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to your cross I cling.

Statement number three. We are justified on the basis of Christ's merit alone. Christ alone. We look only to Christ and his merits alone.

[23 : 58] Christian assurance rests solely on the utter sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross. Through which we are made righteous.

I don't want you to stop doing good deeds. They are important for your faith. As far as your justification is concerned, they won't help you one little bit. Statement number four.

Faith is the instrument by which sinners receive justification. It's the instrument. We must believe in faith.

Individual sinners must turn to Christ and rely on his atoning work. Are you relying on it today? The atoning work of Jesus. Since none of us can turn to Christ unless the Father draws us, so says Jesus, then what we need to do as Christians?

We need to pray that God will use us to present the gospel and that the Holy Spirit will move the hearts of carers, just as I was saying this morning, to respond in faith.

[25:00] That's why we share the gospel. Lord, prepare their hearts to receive your word, that your word may take root in their lives by faith. In the fifth statement, the good news of justification is of crucial significance, and notice that word, full comfort.

I want you to be comforted by this. It's a comforting thing. Article 11 concludes by stating that this article is a doctrine very full of comfort.

It's a beautiful thing. Comfort does not mean console. It doesn't only mean console. It doesn't only mean assure. It also means to encourage.

We can be encouraged today in our faith because Christ has paid the price for our sins on the cross. It encourages us. It strengthens us to be the people God wants us to be in this world.

So in conclusion, Paul writes to the Romans, Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[26:13] Apart from justification by grace, through faith in Christ, there is no peace with God. You won't find it by looking anywhere else. You won't even find it by coming to church week after week after week, which is something I want you to keep doing because we gather as God's people, don't we?

We were taught the Spirit ministers to our lives. We receive the Holy Sacrament. By faith with thanksgiving, Christ nourishes our lives. But there's no peace with God or with our brothers and sisters or with our neighbors or in the long run, there is no peace within ourselves.

Martin Luther had it right. Justification received by faith alone is the doctrine of a standing or a falling church.

Thank God it's the doctrine of the Anglican Church. Men like Cramner gave their lives as a result of this great truth. Ultimately, Christ gave his life on the cross that we might be justified through his atoning work, received by faith and in grace.

So there we go, article number 11. I'm pleased to present it to you. We're hell-deserving sinners, all of us, but we're saved and we're justified and we're comforted by Christ alone.

[27:37] God bless you. Let's pray together. Gracious Father, our words are not sufficient for us to give thanks to you for the work of Christ and yet they are all we have.

And so we yield our lives recognizing that by grace we have been saved through faith. Not our own doing, but the gift of God, not as a result of our works, so that we may never boast.

Gracious loving Father, we thank you for this truth, this doctrine that we are justified by faith, a very wholesome doctrine, very full of comfort.

And for these things we give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Thank you. Bless you. Any instructions?

I was holding up my notes. Tempest in a teapot.