

Pentecost
John 14:23-31

We're going to have a two-part sermon. As I was contemplating the text one of Luther's famous quotes came to mind. Luther is preaching and talks about how the Reformation was successful:

"I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything." (AE 51.77)

The Word, the Word, the Word. The Word does the work. The Word convicts you of sin. The Word assures you of the promises of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and the salvation of your souls. The Word comforts you when you're depressed or anxious. The Word does the work. There are two aspects of the Word I want us to meditate on during Pentecost and Holy Trinity. First, the Word is all about Jesus. Second the details of the Word matters. This week we'll look at how the Word testifies about Jesus.

Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading today:

"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, He will bear witness about Me." (Jn 15:26)

The Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus and it gets recorded as the Four Holy Gospels. But you know that the whole Bible is about Jesus. When Jesus was on the road to Emmaus with two of His disciples, He showed them, beginning with Moses and the Old Testament Prophets, how it all revealed Him. (Luke 24:27)

The first Adam fell into sin and doomed the entire human race to be born in sin. The second Adam redeemed the entire human race with His sinless life and atoning sacrifice on the cross.

The first Israel was disobedient and a stiff-necked people. The second Israel was perfectly obedient even to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The first great prophet Moses died outside of the Promised Land because of his disobedience. The second great Prophet, Jesus, died for your disobedience and rose again to usher in the new Promised Land.

The first great king, David, sinned horribly, and was not allowed to build the temple. The second great King, Jesus, Himself the temple, sits at the right hand of God the Father and rules everything with His mighty and merciful hand.

This totally changes how we read the Scriptures, both the Old and the New testaments. Let's take a look at some Psalms as an example. And I owe these insights to Father Burnell Eckardt, a Lutheran pastor in Illinois. Consider Psalm 1:

"Blessed is the Man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His Torah He meditates day and night." (vv. 1-2)

It says blessed is *the* Man. Man here doesn't mean mankind in general. It doesn't mean a woman. The Hebrew word here is the word for man, ish, and not the word for mankind, adam. When you consider the holiness and awesomeness of God, how many of you would feel comfortable claiming to God that you meditate on His Torah day and night? I'm your pastor, and it's really a major part of my job to meditate on the Torah, and even I don't do it day and night. We're beset by our own sin and the turmoil in the world caused by sin.

We're weighed down with our own burdens and the burdens of others. It's hard for us to meditate on God's Word for five minutes, let alone day and night!

But Jesus is the Man who does meditate on the Word of God day and night. Jesus is that "tree planted by streams of water that yields His fruit in His season, and His leaf does not wither. In all that He does, He prospers." (v. 3) Jesus took on human flesh and lived a perfect life. He bore fruit. There were 120 disciples on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 souls were added to His church on this day! Countless others have been added since that Pentecost day including yourselves! The church prospers because it is the work of the Man and His Holy Spirit who works through the Word that reveals that Man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We finally come into Psalm 1 in verse 5. We are part of the congregation of the righteous. We don't stand in the congregation based on our own righteousness or we would doubt whether or not we do stand in that congregation. We stand in the congregation of the righteous based on Jesus' righteousness given to us in our baptism. If we stand there based on Jesus' righteousness, then we know our standing is secure! And because we stand in the congregation of the righteous, our meagre attempts to meditate on God's Word are richly rewarded. Our dear Father in heaven treats us like we meditate on the Word day and night.

If we understand Psalm 1 this way, Psalm 2 makes much more sense!

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed." (vv. 1-2)

Doesn't this bring up the picture of the priests and Herod and Pilate conspiring to murder our innocent Lord? And the nations and rulers still rail against our Lord Jesus. There's a reason Psalm 2 follows Psalm 1.

It teaches us to trust in God our Father who holds these faithless rulers in derision. (v. 2) He has made Jesus King on Zion. (v. 6) He makes Jesus a heritage of the nations. The church triumphant is filled with believers from all tongues and cultures and nations. We are part of that triumphant church and we know that we are blessed because we take refuge in Jesus (v. 12)

Psalms 22 and 23 are another great example. Psalm 23 is beloved by many people and even non-Christians. Chances are, if someone knows any Psalm, it will be Psalm 23. But isn't it striking that it follows Psalm 22?

You know Psalm 22. We recite it every Good Friday because our Lord recited it on the cross. And not just the first verse, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" but the entire psalm. I don't have to convince you that these words are Jesus' words. They describe His agony on the cross in vivid detail. Psalm 22 is of great help to us in putting our own suffering in perspective. But as you consider the suffering of our Lord on the cross, read Psalm 23:

The Lord is My Shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes Me lie down in green pastures.
He leads Me beside still waters. He restores My soul.
He leads Me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with Me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort Me.
You prepare a table before Me in the presence of My enemies;
You anoint My head with oil; My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow Me all the days of My life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

This Psalm provided great comfort to Jesus on the cross. He was anointed in the Jordan for His ministry. He was led by God's Holy Spirit in paths of righteousness.

He walked through the valley of the shadow of death on Golgotha. Goodness and mercy followed Him into the grave and He was raised so that we too might experience that goodness and mercy.

Now His psalms become our psalms. There's a wonderful mystery to the psalms. They were written mostly by King David. Yet at the same time they are the Psalms of our Lord. The Holy Spirit caused David to record them for and about our Lord. And now they become our psalms through Jesus. We too can pray them and sing them and meditate upon them. There's not an emotion you can feel that isn't expressed by the Psalms. And not only do they give you comfort and courage, but they teach you the mind of Christ. They give you a heavenly language.

And the rest of the Bible is the same way. It's about Christ. The picture of Noah and the flood is the picture of Christ saving us through His ark, the church. The picture of Joseph suffering in Egypt for the salvation of the people of Israel during the great famine is the picture of Jesus suffering on the cross for our salvation through the great famine wrought by our sin. The picture of Moses leading the children of Abraham through the wilderness unto the Promised Land is the picture of Jesus leading us through the wilderness unto the new Promised Land, also known as heaven. The picture of David as shepherd and king caring for the people of Israel is the picture of Christ ruling and shepherding His people in His church. The whole story of the Bible is the story of Jesus redeeming and saving a people unto Himself for eternal glory.

You are His people. You're not born into the church but are brought into it by the cleansing waters of Holy Baptism. You don't earn the kingdom of God by your works but receive it as a gift through faith. The Holy Spirit creates and sustains a living faith in you through His Holy Word.

Jesus bore witness about Himself. The apostles bore witness to Jesus. You also bear witness to Jesus. There's a great tendency in Christendom for Christians to try and bear witness about how Jesus made their life better.

That's a major problem. First, Jesus doesn't promise you that your life will get better. Quite the opposite, actually. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12) I don't hear many who claim that blessing! Second, no one really cares. Not really. "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower fades." (1 Peter 1:24) Even our greatest triumphs fade away. We don't even know where the tower of Babel was! Thankfully, Peter continues, "the grass withers, and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord remains forever! And this word is the good news that was preached to you." (v. 25) Third, the Word of God is the only thing that endures. And that Word spreads through proclamation. First, through the proclamation by faithful pastors and church bodies that see Christ in every page of Scripture. Second, through the proclamation of that same Word by faithful Christians.

Next week we'll look at how the details of the Word matters. Today we've seen how the Word is all about Jesus. The Jesus that saves the world through His work and word. The Jesus that saves you through that very same work and word.

Continue to cling to Him in faith and proclaim the wonders that He has done. And the Holy Spirit will work faith when and where He wills through that Word.

In Jesus' name. Amen.