

Isaiah 55:10-11

Dear Friends in Christ,

I quote: "I am sorry for the men who do not read the Bible every day. I wonder why they deprive themselves of the strength and the pleasure." - Woodrow Wilson.

I quote: "Whoever heard of a Communist on his death bed asking that Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* be read to him? Or when has an eat-drink-and-be merry kind of person asked in death for a reading from *Playboy*? But the Christian dies with the words of Scripture on his lips and the Christ of Scripture in his heart, and he's headed for heaven." - Albert M. Wells, Jr., Author.

I quote: "So great is my veneration of the Bible, that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society." - John Quincy Adams.

The Word of God. Fiercely loved by many. Fiercely hated by many. We spend an inordinate amount of time reading what others think and hearing the latest talk about this and that and whatever. Our communication has become an intense gabfest of gossip, slander, character assassination wild speculation and lies. The Holy Spirit directs us to

THE WORD OF GOD ALONE WILL ACCOMPLISH AND SUCCEED

I. Clear in What It Says. Keeps Its Promises.

My original intent for the sermon this morning was to preach on the Gospel lesson, The Parable of the Sower. That was my intent. However, my heart and mind kept drifting to the appointed Old Testament Lesson for this morning which is connected to the Parable of the Sower with the words, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth." (Is. 55:10-11a)

As I thought about that, I was drawn to something I put in front of you several years ago. It was an observation made in Don McAvany's book, *Storm Warning, The Coming Persecution of Christians and Traditionalists in America*. I'm going to read a piece of what I quoted:

Antonio Gramsci (founder of the Italian Communist Party) concluded in the 1920's and 1930's that the way to soften a targeted country for revolution and communism is to undermine its culture, its morals, ethics, sense of right versus wrong, its spiritual life, etc. until that country is so weakened from within that it can be easily pushed into the hands of an all-powerful dictatorship. (Hearthstone Publishing, Oklahoma City, 1999, p. 345)

That is the direction of this country's Progressive Politics: Decimation of this culture; *its morals, ethics, sense of right versus wrong and its spiritual life*. And then, I connected McAvany's insight to these words of Jesus concerning the Last Days: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." (Matt. 24:21) And, then, these words of Jesus which remind us that God's people will not be raptured away in the sense of escaping the very end: "And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." (Matt. 24:22) **The Word of God is clear in what it says and in keeping its promises.** And you're wondering, "What does all this have to do with our text?" Let's take a look....

II. Remember Moses and Pharaoh.

I'm assuming that everyone here is quite familiar with that moment in time when God sent Moses to speak to Pharaoh. God sowed - planted His Word in Pharaoh through Moses. Do you remember what happened?

“Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, ‘O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.’

“But the Lord said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh...’” (Ex. 5:22-6:1a)

Pharaoh hardened himself against God’s Word, as God said would happen. And then, God hardened Pharaoh into unbelief. Paul writes of this incident, “So then (God) has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.” (Rom. 9:18)

I’m assuming that everyone here is quite familiar with that moment in time when, at the end of Peter’s Pentecost Sermon, after he laid out the Word of God, he stated “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:36) Listen to what happened next:

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sin, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”... So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:37-38 & 41)

In the case of Pharaoh, the Word of God further hardened one who had hardened himself. In the case of the people listening to Peter, the Word of God brought several thousand to faith in Christ! Our text for this morning applies to both cases, again: “so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” *It shall accomplish! It shall succeed!* Both according God’s purpose for sending it.

I’ll say it again: **The Word of God is clear in what it says and in keeping its promises.** In fact, the Holy Spirit reveals through the writer of the Book of Hebrews:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Heb. 4:12-13)

What comfort this is for us. The Word of God is alive (**living - it’s the living Word - Jesus!**) and is always doing something with, in and through His creatures (is active). There is no neutral ground with the Word of God. Wherever it is spoken or read the hearer or reader will either reject or be brought to repentance and faith. One or the other. There is no neutral ground.

III. Light and Lamp.

For us the Word is what the Psalmist says: “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Ps. 119:105) It guides us through this world and addresses our living as God’s people in a fallen world - a lamp. It directs us to our goal: Eternal life through faith in Christ - a light.

Noted Lutheran theologian of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, John Gerhard, wrote, “God’s justice does not allow the same sin to be punished twice; and He has ‘bruised’ His most beloved Son for our offenses, Is. 53:4.” (Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1875, reprinted in 1961, p.361.) And Isaiah 53:4 is most comforting for us poor, miserable sinners: “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”

And I ask you to carefully consider the further comfort and joy of these sentences from Gerhard:

Scripture describes our reconciliation with God to be such that God no longer remembers our sin, Jer. 31:3, but casts them behind (His) back, Is. 38:7, blots them out like a cloud, Is. 44:22, casts them into the depths of the sea, Mic. 7:19, does not impute, but covers them, Ps. 32:1. Therefore He does not hold the reconciled to the reckoning, or exact of them punishments. For were God still to punish, He would still impute; were He to avenge, He would still remember; were He to account, He could not keep covered; were He to examine, He could not cast away; were He to inspect, He could not blot out. (Ibid., pl. 362)

And there they stand, the words of our text: "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." If you believe that Christ is your One and only payment for sin and the One and only Way unto eternal life, the Word has accomplished and succeeded in you - in me - the most wondrous and powerful victory unlike anything this decaying and dying world could ever, ever offer!

It stands there in front of us, goes with us and will be with us forever and ever: "Jesus said, 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'" (Lk. 21:33)

So, what's number one on our reading list? What's number one on our study list - until that moment when we stand in front of the living Word, our Lord Jesus Christ?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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Will Accomplish and Succeed”***

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- II. Remember Moses and Pharaoh.*
- III. Light and Lamp.*

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