

## The Word of God in the Life of the Church

### The Creative, Vivifying Power of the Word

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who **called you out of darkness** into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

For **God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"** has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Thus says the Lord God: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but **the word that I speak will be performed**, declares the Lord God (Ezekiel 12:28)

"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 and bread to the eater, 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. (Isaiah 55:10-11)

Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. **Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ...you shall live**, and you shall know that I am the Lord." ... And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; **I have spoken, and I will do it**, declares the Lord. (Ezekiel 37:4-6, 14)

"Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, **through the living and abiding word of God**; for: "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And **this word is the good news** that was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:23-25)

### The Word as a Means of Grace

The sacraments are a sign and a seal of God's covenant promise to us:

Baptism. Old Testament equivalent is circumcision.

This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be **a sign of the covenant** between me and you. (Genesis 17:10-11)

He received the sign of **circumcision as a seal** of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. (Romans 4:11)

Lord's Supper. Old Testament equivalent is the Passover meal.

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for **this is my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:25-28)

We are always passive recipients of the sacraments. Like the sacraments, the preaching of the word is a sign of God's covenant promise. We are first and foremost passive recipients.

## God works through the Word

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 of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:15-17)

## **Receiving the Word vs. Responding to a Message**

"The preached Word is the Word of God." (Second Helvetic Confession)

The preacher is a herald, not a coach or a motivational speaker. Good advice requires a person with a plan. Good news requires a person with a message.

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. **For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.** (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "**The word is near you**, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim). (Romans 10:5-8)

## We come to church to be served

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward **you will understand.**" (John 13:6-7)

Therefore, **as you received Christ** Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **my yoke is easy**, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

The **Son of Man** came not to be served but **to serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)