



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

Preaching the Word (Homiletics)

Lesson #10

C. The Power of God's Word

2. The Holy Spirit at Work through the Word

The Bible contains many examples of how God does amazing things through His powerful Word. Think of creation. **“Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light”** (Genesis 1:3). **“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...For He spoke, and it was done”** (Psalm 33:6, 9).

Think of God's control of the world He created. **“He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; He casts out hail like morsels; who can stand before His cold? He sends out His word and melts them. He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow”** (Psalm 147:15-18).

The false teachers in Jeremiah's time spoke lying words to deceive the people. Jeremiah responds: **“He who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully... ‘Is not My word like a fire?’ says the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’”** (Jeremiah 23:28-29). God's Word is not only powerful, but it is also effective. It accomplishes God's purposes: **“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word that goes forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void (empty, without result), but it shall accomplish what I place, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”** (Isaiah 55: 10-11).

Preachers of God's Word need to have confidence – not in themselves and in their oratory skill, but in the power of God's Word to accomplish what He wants. What does God want? He wants to create faith in Christ. He wants to produce the fruits of faith. He wants people to be saved. And He accomplishes this through the preaching of His Word. James writes: **“Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth”** (James 1:18). Peter says that Christians are **“born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”** (1 Peter 1:23). **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword”** (Hebrews 4:12). It is the Holy Spirit that makes God's Word into such a powerful force. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: **“Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance”** (1 Thessalonians 1:5). To the Ephesians he wrote: **“In Him (Christ) you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”** (Ephesians 1:13).

In fact, the Word has this power even when it is proclaimed by unworthy servants, yes, even when it is proclaimed by persons who do not themselves believe what they are saying. When the apostle Paul was in prison in Rome, he proclaimed God's Word to those who were guarding him, and he wrote to his fellow-Christians in Philippi: **“Most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear”** (Philippians 1:14). If Paul could preach the Word while in chains, they certainly should be able to preach the Word also. But Paul was even happy that some were preaching Christ **“from envy and strife,” “supposing to add affliction to my chains”** (Philippians 1: 15-16). For he writes: **“What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice”** (Philippians 1:18). The Word has the power of God in it, even when Christ is preached from impure motives.

The Holy Spirit continues to work through the Word in the hearts of those who have come to faith in Christ through the Word. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: **“We also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe”** (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The Spirit keeps on working through the Word, as it is written: **“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”** (Galatians 5: 22-23). As preachers of God's Word, we have a mighty weapon for our use: **“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”** (Ephesians 6:17).

The devil uses human ideas, human opinions, lies and deceptions. He even twists God's Word for his own ends. We do not want to be instruments of the devil by using such things in our preaching. We want to be instruments of the Holy Spirit by using God's pure Word. We want everything we say as preachers to agree with God's Word, for it is only through God's Word that the Holy Spirit will do His work. We may not be the best speakers in the world. We certainly are not perfect Christians. But the Word that we speak has power if it is only God's Word that we speak. As one teacher has said: “Good preaching involves getting out of the way so that the Word can do its work” (Chapell: *Christ-Centered Preaching*, p. 25).

Questions

1. What are some of the things God has accomplished through His Word?
2. Why is God's Word compared with a hammer, and with rain and snow?
3. What tool does the Holy Spirit use to bring people to faith in Christ?
4. Why was Paul happy about what some of his enemies were preaching?
5. How does the Holy Spirit work effectively in believers?
6. What makes the word that preachers preach powerful and effective?