

GOD'S WORD ACCOMPLISHES HIS PURPOSES

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this sixtieth day before the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord:

My Word which goes from My Mouth will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper that for which I sent it.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Our theme for this week is: *God's Word accomplishes His purposes.* Those words summarize the thread that runs throughout our primary readings. For the congregation in this place, at this time, they are words of encouragement, and words of promise. It is helpful to hear that God's Word does what He intends for us. We who desire to reach those who are not part of our congregation with the news of the Gospel - who may be frustrated with the economic climate of our Church, and economy, that seems to have inhibited our desired means of communication, need the encouragement of this day's text, so God says:

My Word which goes from My Mouth will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper that for which I sent it.²

Having heard that, you are free to grasp the reality that God will use this congregation as His chosen people planted by Him - after all He gave a few of you the idea to keep both your pastors engaged in the work of the Ministry in the Tucson area - that God will use you to accomplish His purposes. He will guide your thoughts and plans, as you continue to ask Him for wisdom and to prosper His Word here.

¹ Isaiah 55:11.

² Isaiah 55:11.

That is true, and God will make it sure – even among us – even if you personally may think the message of this place has been hindered in some way. You may take heart from the illustration that begins God’s promises through Isaiah for this week. He declares:

For as the rain and the snow comes down from the heavens, and do not return there, but cause to water the earth and cause it to bring forth and sprout and give seed to (the) Sower and bread to (the) eater...³

This text is used a couple of times in Holy Scripture. In one it is used by St. Paul earlier in the Letter quoted in this week’s readings. The Holy Spirit led him to cite Isaiah to reinforce, in this last extant letter to the Church in Corinth, that His Church be encouraged in their sacrificial first-fruits giving to provide for ministering to God’s people.

Today, coupled with the parable of the Sower, the reminder that God sends rain and snow to water the earth that it will bring forth grain, can help one understand that God is the One who works all things for the good of His people. The so-called natural events that begin the promise for the week are actually moved by God. How often do we look at the everyday occurrences of precipitation and forget they are not simply caused by “the forces of nature,” but that God is their efficient and active Causer, so that His good earth will produce food for both those who must plant the next harvest, and those who will eat of the present harvest.

³ *Isaiah* 55:10.

How often do you think of the wind, rain, growth of plants and so forth as something automatic? Are they not the creation of God to be directed by Him to produce good for those who need to eat and work? God is not some personless, faceless, unconcerned deity Who set things in the natural order in motion to see what would happen!

Perhaps it will help to remember the Fourth Petition of the Our Father. In it, you will recall, we are petitioning God to make us ever aware that He is the Giver of all that we need to sustain this body and life. Just so He gives us all we need to sustain the life of the Spirit among us, and in the communities in which we live, work, and play. He does not prescribe all the media in which it is to be proclaimed. Rather, He promises that His Word will go forth from His people and bear fruit. God, having declared the realities of what we call Nature, and His ultimate guidance and control of it, says:

so will be My Word which goes from My face: (it) will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper (that) for which I sent it.⁴

Today, in this place, that Word has gone out and continues to pour forth in sermon, liturgy, and Sacrament. From here, in God's chosen vessels, the Word will be carried into the communities in which you live. Do you grasp how God has chosen to pour out His Word each time you depart from here? You are the vessels of the Word. It has been poured into your ears. It will be soon poured into your mouths. It will be carried by you into our world. And, by God's design, it will be used by Him to draw others to Him.

Just as the Lord works through the seemingly natural daily weather to produce seed and harvest, so He works through seemingly natural humans to sow and harvest His Seed of Life – His Good News in Christ Jesus. That Seed, Jesus, had to be sown in the earth, in death, that your sins would be paid for, that you need not die in them, that you might look to the Christ on the cross as the sign, seal, and emblem of your forgiveness and eternal salvation. That is what comes from these words of promise:

so will be My Word which goes from My face: (it) will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper (that) for which I sent it.⁵

That Gospel is the power of God into salvation.⁶ You carry from this place in your hearts, minds and souls, in the atoning death of Christ, the power of God to grant forgiveness. His Word works in you to live under that forgiveness daily. It is that Word of power that raises up the New Man in you. This is not done in secret, out of the sight of others. God works in you, and those outside the Faith do observe, whether you are aware of it or not. That is why the Christian life is most accurately shown and received in daily repentance and the reception of God's forgiveness. That is contained in these words for the week:

so will be My Word which goes from My face: (it) will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper (that) for which I sent it.⁷

God's Word is powerful. It cuts like a double-edged blade (Law and Gospel) which separates the eternal soul from the spirit of Adam. It enters through the ear, and

⁴ *Isaiah 55:11.*

⁵ *Isaiah 55:11.*

⁶ *Cf. Romans 1:16.*

⁷ *Isaiah 55:11.*

cuts through the mind to enable the hearer to discern between thoughts and intents of the heart.⁸ The Word shows that His Seed was sown in you by His means – the Water and Word of Holy Baptism. It is tended in you by the preaching of Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of your sins. It will be brought forth from you in His time. By His plan, it will bear fruit – good works and the witness that will lead others, in God’s time, to Him. So much is contained in these words of Promise:

so will be My Word which goes from My face: (it) will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper (that) for which I sent it.⁹

God’s Word is a cleansing fire, its Law searing away the dross of sin. The Word is likened in Scripture to a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces.¹⁰ It is the Word of the Good News of Jesus death for your sins, and for the sins of all those whom you meet, that brings for the Word that bursts death’s bonds. From the central Word of the Cross comes the reality of the harvest named the Resurrection. The first Seed that fell into the ground, the Seed of Adam, the Christ who died, became the first-fruits of the Resurrection. That same Christ burst through the bonds that bound the faithful. His Body, raised to new life, broke through death’s strong bands.

The suffering and death of Jesus that paid sins’ price, brought the life that is yours even now. That is why we may freely live in the joy of the Resurrection each day, for these words of prophecy were fulfilled long ago:

⁸ Cf. Hebrews 4:12.

⁹ Isaiah 55:11.

¹⁰ Jeremiah 23:29.

For in joy all of you will go out; and in peace all of you will be led forth; the mountains and the hills will break forth before your faces singing; and all (the) trees of the field will clap their hands. ¹¹

Even now, each day that you remain in the forgiveness that is yours in Christ, you have God's peace. You are led forth, every new day, into the life of the Resurrection, even as you die to sin daily. The imagery is of all creation singing in an unending symphony for praise for your salvation. This unending hymn goes on, even as we have sung together the parts of it this day in our liturgy of the Feast of our Lord. The wonderful vision of the time of salvation – of cross and resurrection – continues with the climax of the chapter from Isaiah, as he says:

Instead of the thorn the cypress will come up; instead of the brier the myrtle will come up; and it will be to YHWH for (a) Name, for (a) sign everlasting (that) will not be cut off.¹²

There you heard the culmination of the Promise. The Word that God has sent forth continues to be proclaimed to you, lived in you, and lived through you, that the Word is an everlasting Sign – for His NAME. It is found in you who bear His Name! The Word, even when it seems to be hindered in our plans, the Word will not be cut off. That is sure, for God has declared it to be so. He is faithful, and He will do what He has promised.

So, even as the congregation here moves forward with any plans to communicate that the Gospel is proclaimed here, even if those plans have to change, we will be mindful that God says:

¹¹ *Isaiah 55:12.*

¹² *Isaiah 55:13.*

My Word which goes from My face: (it) will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper (that) for which I sent it.¹³

God's Word always accomplishes His purposes.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Sexagesima (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Isaiah 55:10-13; II Corinthians 11:19-12:9; Luke 8:4-15

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Paster Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT

For as comes down the rain and the snow from the heavens, and there do not return, but cause to water the earth and cause it to bring forth and sprout and give seed to Sower and bread to eater, so will be My Word which goes from My face will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish that which I purpose and cause to prosper for which I sent it.

For in joy all of you will go out; and in peace all of you will be led forth; the mountains and the hills will break forth before your faces singing; and all trees of the field will clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn will come up the cypress; instead of the brier will come up the myrtle; and it will be to YHWH for (a) Name, for (a) sign everlasting (that) will not be cut off.

¹³ Isaiah 55:11.