

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Quinquagesima Sunday, February 11, 2024

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 296, 283, 290, 297, 373:5.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 4:1-10, 2 Peter 1:1-18, Mark 9:2-10.

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Peter writes to strengthen all Christians. He writes, by inspiration of God, *“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.”* (2 Peter 1:12 NIV) And he writes *“I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.”* (2 Peter 1:15 NIV)

In order for Peter to accomplish all these things, God the Holy Spirit causes him to write this letter. He writes *“we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but We did not follow cleverly invented stories.”*

From God’s works of creation we can see his power and wisdom and realize that everything that exists was not just randomly formed or evolved but that it was created by an omnipotent creator. We can experience and see his power, whether through thunderstorms or earthquakes or rushing rivers or death.

But we cannot see or understand all that God has done for us. In a sense we can recognize God’s power in what humans call the “laws of nature” but we cannot know that God intended for mankind to live forever.

We cannot see all of God’s love for us from what he has created. That must come from another source. That source is what he has told us in words. And his words have been recorded for us in the book we call

THE SURE PROPHETIC WORD OF GOD

- 1. What do we know about God?**
- 2. How do we learn about God?**
- 3. We learn about God from His Word, the words of eternal life!**

God caused and permitted his words to be written down so that all mankind of all ages might begin to know what Adam and Eve, his first created humans, knew and what he permitted his prophets and apostles to know. We have the opportunity to learn everything necessary to live forever from God’s prophets such as Moses, Joshua, Isaiah and dozens of others who heard it all directly from God. We have the opportunity to learn everything necessary to live forever from God’s apostles and evangelists such as Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul who heard it all directly from God. And above all, we have the opportunity to learn everything necessary to live forever from Jesus Christ, God’s only-begotten Son who came to earth to redeem mankind from sin. Luther said that if he couldn’t find Jesus Christ in a book of the Bible, that book was probably not inspired by God.

This idea, which is critical and essential to eternal life for mankind, has come to be known as “verbal inspiration.” Paul assures us, as he writes to Timothy, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* (2 Timothy 3:15-17 KJV) Peter assures us that *“holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,”* 2 Peter 1:21 (KJV) meaning that God put into the writers’ minds the very words they were to write. We are talking about word-for-word inspiration.

Peter wanted his readers to know that testimony of eyewitnesses was made even more certain by the solid foundation of written Scripture. None of the writers of Scripture had to come up with their own material. God supplied and controlled the content, using the prophet’s own unique vocabulary, style, and life situation. True

prophecy never had its origin or interpretation in the will of man. So where did the prophets receive their information? ***“Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”***

In addition to knowing something about God from what he created, mankind also knows something about God from conscience. Conscience is the voice God places in everyone which bears witness to his Law. We read in the Bible ***“when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”*** Romans 2:14-15 (NIV) In that same book of the Bible we read of unbelievers: ***“Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”*** Romans 1:32 (NIV)

But conscience isn’t always reliable because conscience may be so hardened by sin that it no longer bothers a man when he sins, or it may tell him something is a sin which God doesn’t say is a sin. The Bible tells us ***“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*** Romans 1:21 (NIV) We also read in Scripture that unbelievers ***“are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”*** Ephesians 4:18-19 (NIV)

So we can never know from creation or from our conscience what God has done to save us. That is something that mankind just cannot learn on its own, regardless of any wisdom or knowledge he or she acquires. We just can’t save ourselves eternally. ***“However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.’”*** 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NIV)

And so we need God’s written word to learn what God has done to save us from sin. Paul writes to Timothy these marvelous words – and how many of us haven’t been blessed to be in the same position! – about ***“how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed – that is, “given by inspiration of God” (KJV) – and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,”*** 2 Timothy 3:15-16 (NIV)

And so we have the Bible, the Holy Scriptures, Holy Writ, the Word of God, to teach us the way of salvation.

Even if we cannot remember word-for-word a bible passage we have learned, there are concordances, books which let us find Bible passages by searching for a particular word found in them. And we even have on-line searches, which let us search our cell-phones and computers for a particular word found in a Bible passage!

We must emphasize again that the Bible is the Word of God. God speaks to mankind through the Bible. The Bible is the living and powerful Word of God.

You must be assured – from God’s Word, not just from what a preacher says – that Peter and God’s true representatives would and must tell you ***“We did not follow cleverly invented stories.”*** Peter, of course, could say he was an eyewitness of the majesty of Jesus Christ. But more importantly, he tells us that ***“holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*** (2 Peter 1:21, KJV) They didn’t just speak their own words and ideas!

God’s Word comes from God, and only from God. We who repeat it are merely his servants and messengers. ***“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.”*** ***“Above all,”*** says Peter. Above all!

Even though human writers wrote these words, we believe, as God tells us, as Paul the Apostle tells us in First Corinthians: ***“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”*** 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 (NIV) When anyone accurately quotes the Scriptures and teaches ***“Thus saith the Lord,”*** he can confidently state along with King David’s last words: ***“The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.”*** 2 Samuel

23:2 (NIV) God gave the human writers not only the thoughts but the very words they were to write down. The Bible, both the books we call the Old Testament and the books we call the New Testament are God's infallible, trustworthy Word.

God's Word is holy. Because it is God's holy Word to and for mankind, we are forbidden repeatedly, for example in Deuteronomy and the very last verses of the Bible, to add to what God commands us, or to subtract from what God tells us, or to twist its meaning or change it in any way. The Apostle John tells us plainly in the book of Revelation: ***"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."*** Revelation 22:18-19 (NIV) Jesus himself assures us that his Word is unchangeable: ***"the Scripture cannot be broken."*** John 10:35 (NIV)

In the process called verbal inspiration, the third person of the Holy Trinity made it his task to bring information from God to the prophet or the evangelist – both moving the person to write and supervising the content so that the finished product is the very words of God himself. To emphasize this, we repeat again that Paul wrote to Timothy: ***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)) God's breath, as though he were speaking out loud to us, comes from each page of Scripture. We can depend on it for our lives! We must pay attention to it! God speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus promised that ***"the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*** (John 14:26 NIV)

And Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ***"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit."*** (1 Corinthians 2:9-10 NIV)

We dare not forget the power of the Word of God ***"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*** (Hebrews 4:12-13 NIV)

We read in the New Testament book to the Hebrew Christians: ***"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."*** (Hebrews 1:1-2 NIV)

Remember that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, came to earth to redeem us from all our sins. That is the message of Scripture, the inspired Word of God, and must be the message we receive from what God tells us in his written Word! After all, ***"the Scripture cannot be broken!"*** (John 10:35 NIV) Amen.

Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for August 28, 2016.