

Sermon for September 8, 2013 - 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28

Theme: Remain in the Word.

- 1) *Every moment of your life.*
- 2) *So you may be blessed.*

“Put these words of Mine in your minds and hearts, tie them on your hands to remind you, and let them be bands on your foreheads; teach them to your children; talk of them when you sit at home, walk along the road, lie down, and get up. And write them on the doorposts of your home and on your gates so that as long as the sky is over the earth you and your children will live in the land the LORD swore to your fathers to give them. . . “You see, today I’m laying before you a blessing and a curse: a blessing if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God I now order you to keep; a curse if you refuse to listen to them and turn from the way I now lay before you and run after other gods you don’t know.

God wants you to be in His Word, but what exactly does that mean? Is going to church once a week enough to consider yourself “in the Word”? How about if you add Bible class or reading a chapter of the Bible every day?

None of these acts really “define” a person as being in God’s Word. There is no set time you need to spend in church or reading your Bible, but being in the Word will affect how much time you spend reading your Bible and gathering together with fellow Christians for worship.

Does this sound confusing? Let me put it this way: Being in the Word is not just reading the Bible and going to church. Rather, being in the Word is a mindset that directs your whole life. Being in the Word means that you are passionate about Jesus and the Gospel. This passion comes from reading and hearing God’s Word and will show itself in your actions, the way you spend your time and how you season your speech.

Let me give you an example of what I mean: Football season is here. Some fans are so passionate about the Packers that they would not even think about missing a game or even a news report about them. Now imagine applying this “fan spirit” to Jesus and the Gospel.

Being in the Word is more than just coming to church and trying to read the Bible every once in a while; it is having a passionate love for Christ and His Word. How much? So much that you want to find out everything you can about Him and His salvation; so much that you think about Him and his Word all the time and are always ready to talk about him – sort of like some of you are with the Packers. Being in the Word certainly includes study, but it is more than that: it is living God’s Word – showing your reverence for his will in your words and actions.

Are you in the Word? There are certainly times in our life when we are less than passionate about Christ. There are times when we don’t feel like coming to church or reading the Word at home. There are times when we don’t feel like praying. And if we start to act according to those feelings, we will start losing our love for Christ and His Word.

Our Sermon text for today encourages us to overcome those feelings by **remaining in the Word.** *1) Every moment of your life. 2) So you may be blessed.*

Part One: Every moment of your life.

Our text begins with God telling us to “*Put these words of Mine in your minds and hearts.*” The word our Bible translates as “mind” is the Hebrew word for “soul”. God wants his Words fixed in our souls. Think about that for a moment: He wants you to love His Word so much, that it makes up the core of who you are!

Someone might ask: Which of His words does the LORD want placed deep inside of my soul? The answer is: all of them. First of all, God wants us to know his law, his commands, so that we might understand that He demands perfection. He wants us to understand that He hates and punishes sin. He wants us to know that we all have sinned and cannot earn heaven on our own. He wants us acknowledging that we need a Savior and to repent of our sins.

And this leads us to the second thing God wants impressed on our souls: the Gospel. He wants us to know that Jesus, His Son, won the forgiveness of sins we need to stand before God. Jesus kept God’s law perfectly in our place. Jesus also took our sins upon himself and went to the cross. Not a single sin stands against us. They all died with Christ. Through faith in Jesus, we stand forgiven, as the Bible says: *God made him Who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would have the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21 AAT)*. This is the message of our salvation and God wants this Gospel imprinted on our hearts and souls, and when it is, it will change our lives. How so? Consider another favorite verse of mine, one whose thought also needs to be permanently tattooed in the heart and soul of every Christian: *May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14 AAT)* When Jesus’ salvation takes first place in our heart, it will also take first place in our lives. We will want to show it, because nothing else matters. The world, with all its enticing pleasure is nothing to us. All that matters is Christ.

These are wonderful thoughts, but how do we keep them fixed in our hearts and souls? Moses tells us: *tie them on your hands to remind you, and let them be bands on your foreheads; teach them to your children; talk of them when you sit at home, walk along the road, lie down, and get up. And write them on the doorposts of your home and on your gates so that as long as the sky is over the earth you and your children will live in the land the LORD swore to your fathers to give them.*

Now, let’s be clear: God is not telling you to literally tie Bibles to your hands and heads. You don’t learn Scripture through osmosis. The LORD is speaking spiritually. He wants his Word in your thoughts so much that whenever you do something in life you are always thinking of the Word. Have the LORD’s Word in mind when you are driving, eating, watching TV, working, etc. . . . Have His Word in your mind and on your tongue at all times.

“But,” you might ask, “How do I begin to do this?” Well, it begins at home. Show your own family, how important the Word of God is to you. Let them see you read the Bible. Talk to your children about Jesus. Don’t send them to Sunday School, bring them – and then stay for Bible class and worship. When you go home, talk about the service together.

Take some time every day to read the Bible and pray together. A simple way to start this is by reading a devotion from the Meditation books we offer in the back of the Church or simply read a story from one of the Gospels. It doesn’t have to be a lot (maybe just a couple paragraphs). It doesn’t have to take up too much time – maybe 5 to 10 minutes every morning to get you started. If you want an easy to read Bible, we have them for sale in the back of the Church. I can also direct you to a good children’s story Bible.

Every morning I prepare a small Bible reading, commentary and prayer that takes about five minutes to read, and send it out by e-mail. E-mail me if you are interested in receiving these devotions (my e-mail address is on front of the Bulletin) and I will send them to you too. The point is, do something. Try to

spend some time in God's Word every morning; and then - as you continue in your day – let everything remind you of Christ. How can you do that? Some of this may sound silly, but it actually works. When I take a shower, I try to remember my baptism, when Jesus washed away all my sins. When driving on the road, I think about the LORD's promise to protect and guide me. When listening to the news and hearing about all the tragedy in this world, I remember Jesus' promise that He will come again soon.

Pray at all times. When faced with temptation, remember your baptism, and how God made you his child. Recall the Ten Commandments and think about how keeping them is one of the best ways to show God your love and thanks. If you sin, remember the cross and immediately ask him to forgive you. Because of the cross, you can be absolutely sure he does forgive you. At the dinner table thank God for your food. Have another brief devotion and pray with your family. When you sit for entertainment, remember who you are in Christ and the Holy Spirit's presence. At night, commit yourself to the LORD's safe keeping.

At first you might feel uncomfortable "talking religion" with one another, but know this: talking about Christ is more important than talking about school, work, friends or how the Packers will do this season. And the more you share your faith with your family, the more you will grow together in the Word. And by remaining in the Word, you will be blessed.

Part Two: So you may be blessed.

Why is it important to remain in the Word? Because if we don't - if Jesus does not take first place in our lives -we will eventually start taking His grace for granted. We will be easily manipulated by false teachers and eventually we will start falling away from Christ. We will stop telling our children about Jesus and put them in jeopardy of losing their faith too.

"It can't happen to me," you might say. Yes it can. In a former parish, I visited some delinquent members who had not been in Church for a long time. I asked them if they still considered themselves Christian, and they said they did. Then I asked them some important questions like, how does a person get to heaven and if Jesus is true God. Guess what: many of them didn't know the correct answers to these questions. They thought they had faith in Jesus, but their confession revealed that they didn't.

If we refuse listen to God's Word, we are in great danger of losing our salvation - no matter how much we call ourselves Christian. Jesus once said: *"Not everyone who calls Me 'Lord, Lord,' will get into the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does what My Father in heaven wants."* (Matthew 7:21 AAT) And God wants us to have faith in His Son by believing His Word!

But there is yet another, greater reason we will want to remain in God's Word: to remain under God's great blessing. What is the purpose of the Bible? To bring us to Jesus in order to receive salvation through faith in him. The Gospel is nothing less than God's good and gracious promises to us, promises of forgiveness, life and salvation. As we cling to the Word in faith, God promises to guide us through life, help us in every trouble, and comfort us in every trial. God promises us to give us everything we need for this life, and safely bring us home to himself in heaven. He promises to be our God and we will be his dearly loved people.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: remain in God's Word and you will be blessed. Have the Gospel in your hearts and in your mind at all times so that you can openly speak to family and friends about the wonderful hope you have. The blessings of doing this are almost too numerous to count. May God help us stay faithful to His Word. Amen.