

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! God's Word Is True and Powerful!

A sermon based on Proverbs 30:5

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

"This book will change your life!" "You need to read this book!" At least, that's what my dad and one of my younger brothers told me a few years ago when they gave me a copy...or three. 'What Wall Street, Banks, and Finance Companies Desperately Don' Want You to Know,' this book brags about itself.

Enticing enough for you to want to give it a read? I haven't? Why haven't I? Mostly because I have more than a couple dozen books on my shelves, on my Kindle app that are must-reads, too...that have been highly recommended by this or that person. But truthfully, in my experiences, very rarely have I found a book that has immensely changed my life.

But there's one that does without fail. And I don't even need to sell it to you. You probably already own a copy. It can carry itself and has for thousands of years. And that's the Bible...God's Word. That book...every word is true. It's powerful. And God's Word changes lives. Listen to how Proverbs 30:5 describes it, ***"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."***

We saw in our 1st Lesson how God's Word changes lives. The people of Judah were going astray – nothing new there. But even their leaders, these kings put in place by God...these kings, meant to be God's representatives...these kings, meant to carry on the blood lines for the Savior, for Jesus...these kings were often leading the charge for change (for the worse) and were leading the people away from God and right into the arms of idols. It was a terrible, sickening, sad time...a time when God's wishes weren't being followed...a time when God's Word was neglected, forgotten, lost...until King Josiah rediscovered it.

And you saw the power of that Word...how it roused the people from their spiritual slumber, how it led to a reformation, with Josiah ridding the land and the Temple (God's house) of these false gods...how it moved the people to recommit themselves to God and to following his commands.

It's not unlike what was happening 500 years ago, in Europe, where people were out of touch with God's Word...where spiritual leaders were, too, neglecting God's Word, were holding up the word of man instead, and they were leading people away from God...until a man named Martin Luther rediscovered God's Word and really rediscovered the truth of God's Word, that we are saved by the grace of God and through faith in Jesus, we are covered in his righteousness, and that frees us to serve God in love without having to worry about achieving salvation on our own.

And we've seen the power of that Word...how it led to a huge reformation in the church at the time, to the point of where we are today, holding up God's Word as truth and letting it speak in our lives, thanks to God working through his servant, Martin Luther.

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! God's Word is powerful! God's Word is true! God's Word...now that's the book that changes lives.

Do you agree? That it's true? Then you're part of a small group that's growing smaller each and every day. And it's not only the people who view the Bible with highest criticism, who won't even treat the historical sections as being actual and factual but who call this a bunch of fairy tales.

No, I'm talking about those who have this, what I'll call, Dalmatian theology...where they'll choose which spots, which areas, of God's Word they want to treat as truth, but then everything else, well that's more or less subjective, you can take it or leave it...you don't have to accept that as truth.

For instance, I think we would all agree we've been saved by grace – that's God's undeserved love – as God tells us, ***"It is by grace you have been saved...and this not of yourselves."*** So, that means there's nothing we can do...there's nothing we have to do to pay for our sins or to get into God's good favor.

But then, you'll find religions or people who will contradict that when they require people or themselves to do all these good things, these good works, to make up for what they've done wrong, as if they can pay for their own sins and somehow earn God's favor, which directly contradicts that passage I just read. Or, when they require people or themselves to make a decision or to pray the prayer to believe in Jesus, as if they can make that decision of their own volition, which again, directly contradicts the passage I just read because that's a work we'd be doing for God to earn our way into heaven.

Or, the Bible tells us the way we show love for God is "to obey his commands." But who of us don't have commands of God we'd rather not follow (or don't follow) or ones we'd rather not advocate and defend, especially with some of the hot button, moral issues in society today? Because there, we'd like to think there's some wiggle room or gray area with what God says in his Word, kind of like Satan's half lies to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, "God says, "Don't eat or you'll die." You will surely not die." Maybe he's deceiving you to think some sins aren't really all the bad or serious.

Do we treat all of God's Word as truth? We're probably all guilty of not doing that...at least doing that all the time. And why not? Because, if all of God's Word is true, then we have to agree it's powerful as well.

Do you agree with that?

Not here, but at another church, I sat down with a young lady, who was living, rather boldly, in a couple of sins. What we did when we met...I opened my Bible, handed it to her, and had her read a couple verses that spoke directly to her sin...and how those who do that sin are doing so to their judgment.

I didn't have to say anything; her reaction said it all as she looked at me, embarrassed, and simply said, "Whoa!" She read the truth and was confronted by her sin. That's the power of God's Word.

But it doesn't only bring us face-to-face with our sins and move us to recognize them. Listen to the next verse in Proverbs, ***"Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."*** The last book of the Bible, Revelation, expounds on that a little more, ***"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy (which would happen if we don't follow his Word), God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this book."*** God's Word is powerful because it condemns us...for any sin, for any lack of perfection, God's Word condemns us.

God Word is powerful also in this...it changes lives. Our whole VBS theme this year, Mighty Fortress, is in celebration of the 500th year anniversary of the Lutheran church, and really the impetus behind it, Martin Luther. God's Word changed his life. I want to share an excerpt, where Luther described his "conversion" experience:

My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage Him. Therefore I did not love a just angry God, but rather hated and murmured against Him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.

Night and day I pondered until [by the grace of God] I saw the connection between the righteousness of God and the statement that "the just shall live by faith." Then I grasped that the righteousness of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith (that is, declares us 'not guilty' of sin). Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before "the righteousness of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.

Can God's Word...has God's Word changed your life? Kids, I think you can help me out with this. Let's tell everyone our Take-Home Points...what God's Word taught us this past week: *Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Shout! God is mighty!...Fear not!...Jesus comes to save...Jesus is our Savior King! The victory is won!*

God's Word is powerful because it saves us. God's Word is powerful because it tells the message of our Savior, Jesus, who saved us. It's a promise God made long before Jesus even came...a promise Jesus kept when he lived a perfect and sinless life, when he died an innocent death on the cross, when he rose again to save us.

The entire Bible focuses on that good news, from Genesis to Revelation...from God's first promise to Adam and Eve that a Savior would come to its final fulfillment at the end of this world...that in the end, Jesus wins...it's all here. God's Word changes our lives because no longer do we need to fear being condemned because of our sins because Jesus has won the victory of sin, death, and the devil for us. And it's all here.

And now, that same, life-changing Word gives us comfort. You see, in God's Word, we have a flawless guide through life and death. It's all true. And because it's all true and flawless, we can always count on God's Word – all of its promises and warnings, its commands and assurances. This is the place to go with all of our needs and problems. And so, in that sense, it's a shield for us....it's our refuge.

It's true. It's powerful. It's life-changing. It's needed. We need that good news. We need God's Word. We need to be in God's Word.

At the Seminary, where I went to school, they have these archives...a locked room, where they keep important documents and manuscripts, some dating back to the early days of our church body. I can tell you, even though a vast majority of those documents are important and valuable, not many people can have access to them.

It would be like visiting a museum, where everything is placed under glass. And, even if you were able to see a copy of the Gutenberg Bible, the first Bible mass-produced over 500 years ago, you wouldn't be able to pick it up and start reading it, for fear it would fall apart.

Don't have that fear with your Bible. Someone once said, "A Bible falling apart belongs to someone who isn't." God's Word is one of the most precious treasures in this life because in these pages, we see our Savior; we see our salvation; we see our victory.

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Our mighty God has the greatest news to tell you. It's all here....the promise of a Savior, the story of your salvation, the guide of living in thanks to Jesus. That's not the kind of book you'll want to put under glass or behind locked doors. It's a book we won't let gather dust on our shelves or coffee table. And it's not all hype either. But it is true; it's powerful; it's life-changing. This is a book you want to read...a book you'll keep reading. Amen.