

Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:1-13

Related text: Ecclesiastes 5:10-20

Mark 10:23-31

Date preached: October 21, 2012

Grace to you and peace from God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

When you think of sharp objects there are a number of items that may come to mind. We might think of scissors used to cut fabric for clothing. We might think of a knife to fillet a fish. Consider the scalpel that in the hands of a surgeon cuts out the malignant tumor. Even paper can remind us of its ability to cut leaving us that uncomfortable momentary pain.

Yet on our list of sharp objects I doubt that many of us would list, the Bible. The Scriptures, the Word of God are described by its sharpness. Consider what we've heard from Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Indeed the Word of God with its ability to cut can hurt. It hurts because the word of God reveals our sin. Some of our sin can leave us feeling quite embarrassed. As the

Word of God reveals our sin, it brings sorrow to our hearts as we realize the harm we have cause to neighbors, be they strangers or those who are very important to us. That is how the word of God functions. It functions as law.

While we may want to keep our sin hidden, the law will cut through even the hardest of walls we might erect around our darkness of our sin. Once cut open, it acts like a mirror. Standing in front of the mirror the law reveals that which needs to be cut out with pinpoint accuracy. Revealed is our complete unworthiness before the face of God. Before God the Word leaves us without excuse, naked and exposed.

Is it any wonder that there are folks who want to dull the razor sharpness of God's Word? We take God's Word and apply it to everyone but us, for fear of what we might see in the Word's shiny blades. There are those who dismiss the meaning of God's Word as not being relevant to today's life situations.

As an example, consider our failure in the observance of the Sabbath. Were we to obey such command then when would we get our work done? When would we devote that time to getting our children to the activities

in which we've enrolled them? And should we find those moments of rest, we claim to be too tired to be attentive to the Word of God.

Yet, we cannot do away with God's Word because it will cut us. While the law of God's Word kills, it is the Gospel of God's Word that makes us alive.

The one who makes us alive is Jesus. It is Jesus who turns what is impossible for us into a promise of God. Through Jesus, the living Word of God, there is life and salvation for us.

God's Word, Jesus Christ is living and active. It is he who meets us, and by his very presence bids us to repent of our sin. To repent of our sin is to confess it. Led by the Spirit to confess our sins, the Spirit opens our hearts to receive the grace of God's forgiveness.

That gift is made possible through the death and resurrection of our Lord. We are made alive through Jesus who endured the full poison of our sin, cleansed us from all unrighteousness and restored to us the joy of salvation.

It is the joy of salvation that eagerly meets us in the Word of God. From its pages we hear good news. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 reads: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord meets us in many places. He meets us in the waters of baptism. In Holy Baptism, we are adopted as God’s children and made heirs of His Kingdom.

The Word of God meets us in, with and under tangible gifts of bread and wine. “This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sin.”

Our life then is one that we live in response to this good news. Among the ways we respond is to offer thanks and praise. That is the joy we experience in observing the Sabbath. We give thanks to God through prayer. We give thanks to God is singing.

It is in thanksgiving that we tend to the needs of our neighbor through such ministries as the food pantry, meals on wheels, Bread for the World, etc. These are gifts of thanks that come from grateful hearts made new through the Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.