

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 7
Saturday, July 15, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, July 16, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

“The Seed is Always Good”

Isaiah 55:10-13

The next two Sundays, I will get to go to church with Annalisa in Evansville, Indiana. So I get to listen to another pastor preach. Going on vacation; going to a different church; hearing the Word of God spoken by someone else is always a joy for me because I get to hear the Word of God spoken by somebody else; I get to sit with my family in church (which doesn't happen very often); and I get to hear the Absolution spoken by someone other than me.

Yes, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins that I speak in the stead and by the command of God is meant for me also. However, it feels different coming from another pastor. Visiting another church where the truth of God's Word is proclaimed is a joy. However, is it also a challenge – for me.

It is a challenge for me in the same way being a passenger in the car is a challenge for me. The driver is getting me safely to our destination. However, I would be driving at a different speed – perhaps a little slower; perhaps a little faster. I just know it would be different. I would be either a little closer or a little farther away from the other cars. I would apply the brakes a little sooner, or maybe not quite as soon. I could go on, but you get my point.

Listening to a sermon (a good sermon), I struggle to not find myself thinking about how I would have said it a little differently. Because when I think about how I would have said it, the Law and the Gospel of God is being proclaimed, but I am not really listening to it. I am focusing on my thoughts and my words bubbling up within me. This is a problem. God's Word will accomplish what God purposes for it, and it is meant for me to hear it – even when God's Word says things that I really don't want to hear.

Within the church, we speak of “alien righteousness” – how our righteousness, all the good that we have, is foreign to us; it comes from outside of you. Your righteousness does not bubble up from within. It belongs to someone else. The righteousness you have is Christ's righteousness placed upon you.

How does this happen? How does God make you righteous? We hear about it in the appointed readings for today. Isaiah says, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and . . . water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes out from My mouth.”

God's Word comes to you in the same way that rain and snow come and water the earth. It is not by your work or decision. This is God's work for the good of you. Now, don't hear Isaiah wrong (and this is a very important distinction). God's grace and mercy does not directly rain down on you from heaven. His Word comes like rain from heaven. It is in His Word that we receive grace and mercy through the faith that His Word creates in us.

Luther even says that “God does not want to deal with us human beings, except by means of His external Word and sacrament. Everything that boasts of being from the Spirit apart from such a Word and sacrament is of the devil.”

This is from the Book of Concord in the Smalcald Articles (which means upholding this understanding of the Word of God and the grace of God is something that I, and every other pastor in our churches, has vowed before God to uphold). It’s important.

God does not deal with you or me apart from His external Word and sacraments. This is how Jesus comes to you. And you can see this all the way back in Isaiah. God’s Word rains down and does not return empty. God’s Word gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater.

Seed and bread; this is Isaiah talking about Jesus. In Genesis 3, God promised to Adam the “Seed,” the “Zera” (a Hebrew word weakly translated at “offspring” in most of our English bibles). The word is “Seed.” He, the Seed, would crush the head of Satan. Likewise, God promised this same “Seed” to Abraham in Genesis 15. He would be a blessing to all nations. The Seed is the Messiah. The Seed is Jesus. The Bread is Jesus. Jesus says, “I am the Bread of Life.”

We jump ahead to Matthew’s Gospel and the Parable of the Sower. The Sower is Jesus. Do you sense a pattern here? It is not about me and my thoughts. It is about Jesus and His Word. In the Parable of the Sower, the Seed is the Word of God. But wait, I thought Jesus was the Seed. Yes, He is. “The Word became

flesh and made His dwelling among us,” as we hear in John’s Gospel. Jesus is the Sower and He sows Himself into you – through His Word.

The Seed is always good. The point of the Parable of the Sower is not that you need to be good soil so that the Seed will produce 30, 60, or 100 fold – as if God needs me or you to be “good” so that His work can be accomplished. God’s will is accomplished because God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven – even with or without our prayer, as Luther says. The Seed is always good.

Isaiah says in our reading today that God can make a thorn bush grow up to be a cypress tree. Nothing is impossible for God. God brings life out of death. And He creates this life in you through His Word. Not even Moses and Elijah received direct revelation from God apart from His spoken Word. God spoke words to them. The letter to the Hebrews begins, “In many and various ways, God spoke to His people of old by the prophets, but now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.”

You have heard the words of Jesus. You have received Jesus as He came to you in the waters of Baptism (water joined with the Word of God). Receive Jesus as He comes to you under the form of bread and wine – a miracle brought about by the words of Christ Himself; the Words of Institution. God’s grace comes to you because God’s Word has come to you and has created faith. We are saved by grace through faith; it is a gift from God brought to you through His saving Word.

His Word does not return empty. The Seed is always good. Amen.