

Knowing God's Word

October 28, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Mann

I hope you are enjoying yourself this morning because this Sunday is all about Lutheran tradition. Today is Reformation Sunday so we cheer Martin Luther, we boo the Pope, and we stand up to sing, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” Today is also Confirmation Sunday and that too is a long Lutheran Tradition. How many of you remember your Confirmation Day? It’s a pretty important day for most of us Lutherans. Family and relatives travel many miles to be here. Back in the day, Confirmation Day was always on Palm Sunday. Most people were farmers, it was spring, the end of school, classes were finished and it was time to go out and plow the fields. I was confirmed in Minnesota in May. It was around the end of school. It was the third Sunday in May—not the last Sunday in May (that was Memorial Day Weekend); not the second Sunday in May (that was Mother’s Day); not the first Sunday in May (that was the opening day of Fishing Season)—Confirmation Sunday was always the third Sunday in May. But for us, it’s in October—Reformation Sunday. And it just so happens to be the 501st anniversary of the Reformation—when long ago Martin Luther stood before princes and pope and said, “Here I stand” on the Word of God.

Today, the value we are talking about is the value of KNOWING GOD’S WORD. So, I’d like to share these words from John 8:31-32—Jesus says, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

God's Word is under attack, and that's nothing new. In Luther's day, God's Word was sidelined. The words of popes and councils became more important. One of our own founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson, took a knife to God's Word. He used a pocket knife to cut out all the parts of the Bible he said were "contrary" to reason. That meant all the miracles—like the feeding of the 5,000, and all the healings, and Jesus walking on the water, and of course the Resurrection. What he had left he pasted into a notebook and called it "The Life and Morals of Jesus Christ." But it wasn't the Bible.

There is a verse in the Book of Isaiah and I just love this verse because long ago, in Old Testament times, God slips in this little science lesson. He reveals the principles of the ecosystem long before anybody even thought about that word ecosystem. He says, "*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but 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.*" Today we know all about things like precipitation and evaporation and transpiration and the water cycle—but they didn't know any of that stuff back then. But here it is in the Bible. And then God says this: "*My word shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish the purpose for which I have sent it.*" (Isaiah 55:10). Do you hear that? God's Word has power! When God speaks his Word it is not going to bounce back at him like an empty echo. It is going to accomplish the purpose for which he sent it. God's Word has power. The words of this book (the Bible) have power. That's why we value KNOWING GOD'S WORD. I want you to notice the fact that in Isaiah God doesn't say, "The Bible" or "My Book." He says, "My Word" is going to accomplish the purpose.

Centuries later John wrote at the beginning of his Gospel, "*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ...* (The Word being talked about here is Jesus Christ). John writes, "*In him was life and that life was the light of men.*" God sent His Word—Jesus into the world. For us, as Christians, God's Word is a person and the value is KNOWING JESUS!

Most of the major religions in the world have books of some sort. Most of those books contain a lot of rules. The Bible contains rules. But here's the thing—the ONE thing that makes the Christian faith different from every other world religion. This Bible is not just a book of rules. This book—the Bible—is about Jesus. This book is about how Jesus kept the rules for us. This book is about how Jesus lived a perfect life and then died on a cross. Do you want to know how much God loves you?—Then look at the cross. Look at his arms outstretched there. Do you know all the times you forget and fail to keep the rules? Jesus paid the price for your failure, your forgetfulness, and your sin on the cross. Without Jesus, the Bible is an empty book filled with rules and regulations. With Jesus, the Bible is the story of a God who loved us so deeply that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.

Do you know the name, John Stott? He's a Christian writer. In 2005, Time Magazine ranked him as one of the 100 most influential persons in the world. This is something he wrote: *"I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing around his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time, after a while I have had to look away. And in my imagination I have turned instead to the lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. OUR sufferings become more manageable in the light of HIS. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it boldly stamp another mark—the cross which symbolizes [God's overwhelming love for you and the lengths He was willing to go to make you His child.]"* In your life, there will be days when you feel far away from God. On those days remember the cross and the outstretched arms of Jesus and how much God truly loves you.

