

“The Dynamic Word of God”

Psalm 119:105-112; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

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The term “word of God” is usually used in a way that is synonymous with “The Bible.” However, there is much more to understand about the word of God, which is alive and dynamic as we apply the Bible, the word of God, to our lives. Its meaning is wider and deeper and more dynamic than “The Bible.”

Anyone who picks up the Bible to read will readily and clearly see that when God speaks, things happen, and God’s word accomplishes what it sets out to perform. From the opening chapter of the Bible in Genesis, we see how God created the entire universe by God’s spoken Word. In Genesis 1:3 we read: “*And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.*” The phrase, “*And God said,*” is found throughout this chapter. Apparently, when God spoke there was a direct action that fulfilled God’s word as creation unfolded. In fact, what this means is that God’s word is not just a part of history, but God’s word creates history.

*Morning has broken
like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken
like the first bird.
Praise for the singing;
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing
Fresh from the Word!*

The word of God is so much more than the written word because it also refers to the dynamic action of God in creation and, not least, in human affairs. God’s word is word that *moves*, word that *acts*, word that accomplishes a *purpose*. And that dynamic purpose is to shape the people of God. Since the beginning of time, the people of God were a people called into being and formed by the word of God. We should be proud to be a part of this rich Judeo-Christian tradition. John Wesley called us “people of the Book” whose lives are being molded and made into the kind of lives God wants them to be.

As a preacher I better believe, and I do believe with all my heart, that the same dynamic occurs when God’s word is read and prophetically proclaimed from this pulpit and from every

pulpit where a preacher faithfully and prayerfully studies and then sincerely attempts to convey God's message to God's people. The word of God is not just knowledge passed on from pulpit to pew, it is a dynamic, living word that shapes us and grows us into the likeness of Christ. As the psalmist wrote, "It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path."

To guide us about the physical terrain, people have invented a series of ever more sophisticated navigational tools. Sonar readouts have replaced sextants among sailors. Precise computer imaging has made compasses obsolete in a pilot's cockpit. And many cars now come with a GPS – a global positioning system – to ensure that you take the right turn on your journey. All these advancements are giving us more detailed pictures of our world and where we stand in it. They let us know with more and more accuracy when we should "go there," and when the data declares "don't go there."

Thankfully, for those of us with little or no physical sense of direction, there is an unerring method of helping us to see more clearly the *ethical and spiritual* direction where God is leading us. This beacon of light is God's word, "a lamp unto our feet, and a light to our path." It is true that divine guidance is given to us in the Scriptures, which have been available to us for thousands of years. There are, of course, certain instances in life where the choices are crystal clear. We often know not to make certain remarks or decisions that would prove harmful to a relationship or to the task at hand. A different example occurred when a man applied for a position with the New York City Police Department. He was interviewed by a panel of officers who tested his ability to react in a variety of situations. "What would you do," one expert asked, "if you had to arrest your own mother?" The man thought for a moment and replied, "Call for backup!"

Jesus knew that, just as he had to face many ambiguous situations, so we would, too. When it comes to guidance and discerning God's word to follow the direction God would have us take, Jesus provided us with "back up." He told his disciples that he would have to leave them, but he would ask the Father to send a "back up." He was referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit whom, Jesus said, will "teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."

The "back up" role of the Spirit is to remind us that God, the great Author of life, did not finish God's work when the last page of the Bible was written. It's the Holy Spirit at work in us

today that makes Christianity something that's current and alive, rather than dead and outdated. It's the Holy Spirit that gives the Church authority to address situations that the Gospel writers never dreamed of. The Holy Spirit is the power of God working in us to guide us in the way of Jesus. It's what makes Jesus' love and wisdom our own. It's what makes faith more than a mastery of facts. It's what makes faith a way of life, always ready to meet new situations, to bring the dynamic word of God to bear on what happens from day to day.

You've got the message, I believe: The word of God is not static, but dynamic. It is not locked away in dusty volumes that deal only with archaic values and peculiar customs. The Holy Spirit makes God's word sharper than a two-edged sword and alive in our lives today. The Spirit shows us how we have a part in the story of the whole creation. It keeps us from thinking that our own individual stories are disconnected from the story of God. The Spirit keeps reminding us that we're part of the whole story of God's creative work in the world. Why? Because Jesus became the living Word, the *Logos*, the Word made flesh dwelling among us and in us.

Let me close with a comment on the parable of the sower and the seed. After telling this parable, Jesus explains to his disciples that the seed the farmer plants is the "word" – or in Greek, *logos* – which has a double meaning: "word," with a small "w," or scripture; as well as "Word" with a capital "W," meaning the Son of God, Jesus himself. This latter meaning is what is meant in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God and all things came into being through him..."

When seeds of faith, like scripture and the presence of Christ himself, take root in us and grow, they produce fruit and flowers, which produce more seeds, which we can then share with others. The growth that takes place in us is dependent upon our providing good soil. We provide the soil, by opening our hearts and minds and letting those seeds be planted and watered and nurtured; God provides the seed – the "Word," the *Logos* – our living Lord.

The wonderful metaphor in the parable is one of taking root. Jesus' point in the story is that the word, that is Christ Himself, must take root in us in order to bear fruit. Christ must dwell within us, richly. We are soil, earth, dust – and to that dust we will return – but from this dust God can create life as we allow the dynamic word of God to be breathed into us – and

that's the meaning of the word "inspiration." One thing the parable makes clear is that *we* control the quality of soil we are. We can welcome Christ. We can admit the living, dynamic word into our lives. We can nourish the growth of the word and Spirit within us, or choose not to do so. It is your choice and mine. God, ever gracious, offers the gift of spiritual life and faith to grow in our soil, but does not force it on us.

We have another special opportunity today to respond to God's dynamic word. God's Spirit will often take words that many of us have become very familiar with in this service and will create a dynamic action by bringing the One who spoke those words to dwell in us ...words read from scriptures, words sung, words in prayers and liturgy, and supremely, the living Word as Jesus stands among us in his risen power ...as God's spirit takes the dynamic written and spoken word, and the living Word – the *Logos*, all wrapped up in one, and reveals God's will and God's way for us. This can happen again today if we make ourselves vulnerable by bowing reverently before God and open our hearts and minds to the influence and impact of God's dynamic word. This can and will happen as we pray in the words of two hymn writers:

*Master, speak, thy servant heareth,
Waiting for thy gracious word.*

*Break thou the bread of life,
dear Lord, to me,
as thou didst break the loaves
beside the sea;
beyond the sacred page
I seek thee, Lord;
my spirit pants for thee,
O Living Word.*

Inasmuch as we allow the Spirit of God to reveal and to teach us the dynamic word of God, and inasmuch as we embrace that word and give permission for the Word of God to dwell in us richly, our lives will bear fruit as we leave this place ... fruit that will last ... in this world and in the next.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.