

"Our Savior Who Heals As He Prays and As He Preaches"

(Mark 1:29-39)

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 8th, 2015

Pastor Espinosa

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

It is a well known concept that words are very powerful. We tried to protect our fragile childhood psyches by relying on the mantra: "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me." Wishful thinking. How easy it was for us as children to be completely devastated by something we heard about ourselves...how hard it is now that we're all grown up to pretend we don't care, but even now we do and we are effected! Gary Chapman in his book *The 5 Love Languages* identifies the languages – ways of communicating love – that different people need to know or at least feel that they're getting love/being loved from those they care about. Chapman has ingeniously identified that some folks are affirmed in believing they are loved through quality time, physical touch, receiving gifts, acts of service, and the fifth one is – personally – my most important one: "words of affirmation"...no one knows this better than my wife Traci. She knows how to lift me up; she knows how to encourage me and how to inspire me. Her words are powerful and as I get older and while her words have always been very influential, as of late in the last several years, her words have become extremely influential. Not long ago when I was a little shaky due to some anxiety coming upon me, she put her hands on my face and looked at me with those tender ocean-blue eyes and said with gentleness and yet with great conviction (as she stared into me): "You're going to be ok." Her words seeped into my soul and they were as a medicine to me. I calmed down. Her words helped me and they continue to help me a great deal. Indeed, the words we use will either make a marriage stronger than one can imagine, or words can rip into the fiber of a marriage...it matters what we say and do not say; and how we say it or do not say it! It matters, it matters, it matters!

We underestimate the power of our words and we do not watch the portal of our mouths...and we sin...we cut up people and pull them down closer to destruction. And some people wonder why Jesus associated murder (the violation of the 5th commandment) with words (Matthew 5:21ff.).

And words can most definitely destroy right? The LORD warns us about the potential damage that the human tongue can cause: "How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell...It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not be so." (James 3:5b-6, 8b-10)

Words, words, words...we underestimate their power. Last week was a big one for me. I traveled to serve our Lutheran Church Missouri Synod on the national level and while attending meetings for the

Board for National Mission I was also equipped with tools that I am able to bring back to serve our congregation here in Irvine...I received equipping words. During that week I also traveled to see my daughter Esbeydi on one day and then my son David on another...we shared words at both visits that were loving words and words of grace! I received healing words and I extended healing words and by the grace of God, they were seemingly well received. Then there was a meeting with the CTCR (Commission on Theology and Church Relations) on a draft I've been working on to serve the church – and esp. her pastors – through the gift of private/individual confession and absolution. The commission gave me affirming words and the work is 95% complete...but the week was also busy, so as I was driving in between all of this, I needed to hear some good words, so I started scanning all the radio stations and I was reminded of how shallow the words in our music can be: words of desperation, lost desire or corrupt desire, conflict, sadness from the idols of the world that people blindly pursue, on and on and on...so I turned off the radio and opened up a hymn...when it was safe – as I drove -- I put these words into my mind and they became my words for travel last week: "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. While the hope of endless glory Fills my heart with joy and love, Teach me ever to adore Thee; May I still Thy goodness prove." (LSB 686 "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing)

Good, good words! Energizing words, words that make all the difference.

But think about this: if your words are powerful (and they are), and if my words are powerful...and if the words that we hear on the radio can influence us...if all words from all people are significant by virtue of the fact that they affect us, how much more impacted are people when God speaks?

We have to be careful because we get accustomed to certain terminology and we start to take it for granted. You all know that when we refer to the Holy Bible, we often say "The Word of God," or "The Word of The Lord"...this is a true designation, but we mustn't permit these words to be taken for granted; to be cheapened, because if your words are powerful...how much more powerful is the Word of The Lord? If when you speak, you impact lives, how much more are lives impacted when God speaks? But perhaps part of the problem is that we forget that that is exactly what is happening when the Word of The Lord is proclaimed and shared...God is speaking. GOD is speaking!

When He speaks, He creates. What He says comes to be. "Let there be light" He once said (Genesis 1:3) and there was light. He spoke to dead Lazarus and dead Lazarus was no longer dead (John 11), but restored to life. He spoke at your baptism, and you came to new life. He spoke at your absolution this morning and you were completely restored in the forgiveness of sins...for absolution is not a wish, but a bestowal; God gives you His grace; He bestows His mercy and love upon you (you receive it as new clothing)...it becomes yours...again, no mere wish, no "hoping for the best;" absolutely is God giving and absolutely you are receiving forgiveness over and over again! This is how powerful His Word is! He will speak again for Holy Communion, and these words of God will guarantee the real body and blood of Christ given to you. I have recently spoken to some grieving people and once again it was celebrated that when we receive Christ in the Sacrament we experience a reunion with all the heavenly host...how precious is this gift? How invaluable are these words that bring heaven and earth together in one place; here through the Words of Christ the veil of heaven is lifted and God comes to you...how fantastically invaluable is that?!

This is what our Gospel is about this day. Jesus is traveling through life with you speaking salvation. We don't speak about this enough. Our words need to bring out His word ministry. Did Jesus save you through the shedding of His blood! Yes, no doubt and this we must continue to proclaim as this is the work of Jesus as our saving Priest, even giving His life for yours so that His death would cover your death! Thanks be to God! BUT this is not the only way in which He saves you dear Christian. He also saves you in His office as Prophet! And what do prophets do? They speak! They use words! Through His speaking, His teaching, His preaching, His praying...through His words...you are healed, you are rescued, you are restored, you are the recipients of the life-giving words of God!

The original at Mark 1:29 is not simply that Jesus left the synagogue, but it is that he and they left THEIR synagogue...the Lord goes to worship with His people...He is here in this place. Your place and His place. He worships with you. He preaches to you through His servants. He sings with you and to you as you sing hymns that are based on His Word. He speaks to you in the liturgy based on His Word...this scene in Mark is a reminder that our Lord travels with us into worship and is blessing us. He is here with His life-giving words...He is saving us now!

The next part is the real-life impact. Traveling with the Word Incarnate and recipients of His words...they go into Peter's house and his mother-in-law is sick (Luke at the parallel passage at Luke 4:38 states that she has a "great" fever)...she is very, very ill. It's bad, it's serious. But the Word of God...His words confirm...that God comes to touch His people. Jesus did not hesitate to grasp her by the hand. He lifts her up and the fever was gone! The word here for "left" her as in the "the fever left her" is the same word we use for "forgive." This is what God's Word does. You want to talk about a fever...ours is the worse one...it is the fever of a depraved heart with depraved thoughts and actions that we pray remain in that closet for no one to ever see...this is our fever, the fever of our horrendous sin...and yet hear the Word: Jesus takes you by the hand, not to condemn you, not to label you, but He lifts you up! Luke's parallel says that Jesus "rebuked" the fever...it's the same word used when He rebuked the winds and waves and the sea became still. Those sins that want to raise havoc in your heart; your fever of guilt and shame; your fever of fear, the Lord Jesus rebukes! And the peace of God takes over...for this forgiveness dear Christian means that the King of the Universe is by your side and will not let you go...you are brand new to Him...and if you are brand new to Him, then THAT must be your true status...and it is! You are in Christ, you are a new creation, the fever is gone! (2nd Cor. 5:17)

But then notice: with the healing, Peter's mother-in-law gets busy! That's us. We don't sit on our forgiveness, but we get moving as forgiven people and part and parcel of your new ministry/service dear Christian is to pay attention to your words. Look, go forth and take inventory...if you've said something to tear down, to rouse unnecessary fear and anxiety in the heart of someone else...go to them, open your mouth and apologize. I know how discouraged we can get, we say, "But its already out there, I can't take it back, etc." OK, but let's go the other way...put something else "out there"...humble yourself, be tender like Jesus is towards you, live in His life, be reconciled through reconciling words...these are the things of love.

And in our text, the word gets around and they start bringing all kinds of people to Jesus...and this is how these words should sink into us and gets back to God's invitation to you to always seek reconciliation whenever it is possible: The Lord through His words has forgiven you so go out and

get others...find them out there, on the byways and highways...go get them and bring them to Jesus! Once you've found an antidote to a fever and esp. when you find that it has an infinite supply...you want to share it; you want to give it away...bring them! Find them! Get them to Jesus! Share His forgiveness...it never stops flowing...and nothing repairs, nothing restores, nothing heals, nothing reinvigorates like forgiveness...these words, "I forgive you" are gold as long as we are humble enough to "confess our sins one to another that we may be healed." (James 5:16) Of course if you think you have nothing to confess, then you're in really big trouble. Living the Christian faith only works with sinners. If you're one of those with nothing to confess then you don't even need Jesus! But if this is the case you are probably also walking on water and I'd like to invite you to my pool later today.

But Jesus didn't stop His saving speaking ministry with these things I've covered thus far. He also cut off at the pass the speaking of the demons...they wanted to come and speak too, but the Lord would not permit them to speak. There were important reasons for this and most important was that our Lord was serving people who did not fully comprehend why He had come...and it wasn't to set up a permanent free clinic (even Lazarus would have to eventually die again), but it was to accomplish the highest healing through His cross and the tomb that He would conquer...that is the demons if they were permitted to speak would have confused the people even as they desire to confuse you (even as they accuse and attack you). But The Lord Jesus says, "Silence!" His desire dear Christian is that the words that would fill your soul would be God's words...not the words of men, not the words of the world, not the words of demons...but the Word of The Lord!

And to punctuate that when Jesus left and then rose very early the next morning...look at that in our text: "he departed and went to a desolate place, and there he prayed." (verse 35)...He was speaking again...using His words all of the time. A true prophet. Speaking to men, speaking to God, speaking, speaking, speaking...with words that are powerful words. Preaching to you salvation, teaching you to remain in His love, and praying for you and when this Great Prophet, the Greatest Prophet (God Himself) prays for you – and He does even now and His prayers are always answered – then you are blessed. And you are! His words are your healing. They are your life. They cast out your demons. They rebuke your fevers. They cover your sins. They give you life that overflows and that will never die...it is our prayer that this one thing needful – the words of Jesus to us – would never cease...that they would fill us everyday so that we continue to have good words fill us as well: "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. While the hope of endless glory Fills my heart with joy and love, Teach me ever to adore Thee; May I still Thy goodness prove." In Jesus' Name!