

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost Ezekiel 2:1-5

The voice of the Lord is powerful, the Psalm says; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. Well, it pretty much would have to be, would it not, being that it is His voice, who created all things in Heaven and earth, and Heaven and earth themselves, merely by means of His Word, by commanding them to be.

His Word has the power, also, to destroy. He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, the Book of the Prophet Isaiah says of Him who shall judge the living and the dead, the Son of God, who is also the eternal Word of God by whom all things were made, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

And His Word has the power, also, to restore, to recover the lost and repair the broken, and even to revive and raise the dead. Most assuredly, I say to you, says our Lord Jesus, the hour is coming, and is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

We hear it also in what we hear today. And He said to me, writes the Prophet: "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you." Then the Spirit entered me as He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me.

As God commanded the Prophet to rise and stand, he was raised and stood; the Spirit entered me as He spoke to me, as he writes it, and set me on my feet. For in the Word of God is His Spirit, who is His very own life and breath, and His power, which works whatever He wills, when and where He wills it.

His Word kills and makes alive. His judgement against all evil condemns all evil, and all evildoers, to eternal death and damnation, against all unbelief and ungodliness and impurity that is in our lives, and in our hearts and minds. And when sinners are made to hear Him who speaks, when and where He wills, they begin to die already then and there, in dismay and despair at His judgement.

And when and where He will, His Word raises sinners up from where we have fallen and restores us from what we have become; as His command raised up the Prophet and made him to stand.

His Word does this ever so much more, as His Word to us today is not merely a command to stand before Him and serve Him, rather, to us has come the Word in which His majesty is revealed in its fullness of His goodness and glory, and so much more, in which His love comes to us, for real, in its fullness, and His own fullness of life.

The Word He speaks to us, to whom the fulfilment has come, is His Word of *salvation*, how He Himself has brought all things to completion for us: the Son of God, who is Himself God from eternity, has left His heavenly home in glory behind to suffer for us a lifetime in this world of suffering and sorrow and sin; and more than that, so much more, He has taken upon Himself the fullness of suffering and sorrow and sin, and borne it for us, to take it away from us. The Son of God had Himself born into our kind, and baptised with us sinners, and baptised into our sin, to take it upon Himself, and bear it for us, and His own judgement against it, in our stead and on our behalf, eternal death and damnation, the fullness of devastation and destruction, that we might not perish in His judgement, but rather live and be with Him for ever in the fullness of His goodness and His glory. He has lived for us the life that we owe it to God to live, in full and complete love for Him, and trust, and obedience, and submission to His will. And He has suffered for us the death we have earned with Him by our failure to live that life ourselves. He has paid the price and penalty for us, in our stead and on our behalf, and won for us full and complete forgiveness for all our sins and shortcomings, and full and complete righteousness before Him.

And His Word of His love and what His love has done for us raises us from where we have fallen and restores us from what we have become. It raises us up and restores us and sets us free to serve Him in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days, in this life and in that which is to come. It presents His salvation to us as full and complete, with nothing left for us to do to complete it or make it our own; it is spoken to us as His *promise*. And with His promise, all that He promises is given, fully and for real, to all who hear His promise and take it to heart.

His Word is the Word of a *good conscience* before Him; it restores us from all shame and impurity, from all evil we have ever done, from all evil and impurity we have in us, and also from the impurity of all evil others may have done to us; we are right with God and righteous before His judgement, pure and perfect in His sight, all on account of what He Himself has done for us.

And in His Word is His Holy Spirit, His very own life and breath, and His power, which works whatever He wills, when and where He wills it. And when and where He wills it, He works it in us Himself that we come alive from the death of disobedience and defiance, so that we hear His Word and take it to heart, so that His salvation is ours, fully and for real.

And some of those He raises up with His Word He also sends and sets to speak His Word to others, as we hear it today that He did with the Prophet.

Son of man, as we hear it today that He said it to His Prophet, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. For they are impudent and stubborn children.

And still He sends His servants to sinners with His Word of salvation. He has set His Church in the world to proclaim His Word of salvation to sinners. And He calls and sets men to serve His Church by speaking His Word of salvation for Him, and to speak His Word of salvation also to the world so as to call unbelievers into His salvation.

And in the Word He has His faithful Church speak to the world, through His chosen and appointed servants, He speaks Himself; as we also hear it today that He said it to His Prophet: *I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them: 'Thus says the Lord God.'* Or as our Lord Jesus also said it to those men He sent to speak His Word, already prior to His death and resurrection: *He who hears you hears me; he who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me!* Yes, for when His faithful Church, and her servants, speak what He Himself has spoken, then it is His very own Word they speak. And as He said it to those who first heard Him speaking it: *The words I speak to you, they are Spirit, and they are life.* Or as He has had His holy Apostle Paul write it: *the Gospel, that is: His Word of salvation, is the power of God unto salvation.*

The Word of salvation He has entrusted to His Church to speak has the power to save, actually save, in that by it, sin is actually forgiven. As He said it to those whom He sent to speak His Word to the world: *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.* Yes, for again, it is the Word of all the sin of all sinners having been dealt with and done away with with His sufferings and death, and overcome, and gone.

And His Word has the power to save, also, in that it has the power to make sinners to come alive from the death of ungodliness and unbelief. For again, in His Word is His Holy Spirit, that is: His own life and breath, who works faith and life and salvation, when and where He will, by that very Word.

One would think that all would take His Word to heart, and joyfully so; after all, it is the Word of full forgiveness for all our sins and shortcomings, of rescue from eternal death, of eternal life with Him in glory.

Moreover, it is the Word of the greatest love of all: that He who is God Himself from eternity would bear the fullness of suffering for us, for our salvation, for us who have done Him so much wrong with our evil and ungodliness and unbelief, and still do.

But then, it does come with this insulting implication, does it not, that He alone is God, and I am not, and in fact, I am not even *almost God*; that I owe Him my full and complete obedience in all things; and that my sin is not cute at all, it is evil, and it makes me to be a poor, miserable sinner, and to have earned nothing but punishment with Him, in this life and the next.

And sinful nature will not have that. That is why *natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God*, as the holy Apostle Paul writes it, *for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, that is: we can only receive and know them when the Spirit makes us to, by means of His Word. Nevertheless, God is God. He will bring His good will to completion. We hear it today that He said to His Prophet: *As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house— still they will know that a Prophet has been among them*. He will be proven right and righteous in all He speaks and does.

Those who reject His love, as His love shines in His Word of His love and what His love has done, to them no injustice is done. For by their insistent unbelief they sin against the greatest and most holy of all, the love of God, and what He has done for their salvation. That they remain in death is their own doing. And they shall see their wrong, in the end, when the Son of God shall come in glory to judge both the living and the dead. *Behold, He is coming with the clouds*, as He has had His holy Apostle John write it, *and every eye shall see Him, even they who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth shall weep because of Him*. Even so. Amen.

As such, as His Church, and His Christians, we need not obsess ourselves with the *results* of our testimony; our sole concern is to be *faithful*; to reach out to the world, in love, with His Word; as we hear it today that He said it to His Prophet: *you shall say to them: 'Thus says the Lord God!'*; and to surrender, ourselves, to His love, with the obedience of faith, and live in the Word and worship of His love, in which His salvation is given to us, and His will for us brought to completion.

Now, to Him, whose power works in us and can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, be glory, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.