

Vicar Caleb Weight

October 7, 2017

Hope Lutheran Church

“Scripture Alone”

Grace, Mercy and Peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

I remember being extremely excited about taking my very first preaching class at Seminary. This is where they are going to teach us all about how to be an effective preacher, and how to structure different sermons to keep them fresh and engaging. This class was going to give me the tools I needed to craft engaging, exciting sermons for the rest of my career! This class was going to transform me, creating a mediocre public speaker into a competent preacher... well, I can tell you I couldn't have been more wrong, this class did not focus on 20 different sermon structures, or delivery techniques, but instead, it focused on something foundational.

The first day of class, my Professor told me something that to me, was ground breaking. He said, “when we preach, we are tasked with killing and making alive.” Now, he was not saying our job is to actually do these things, but the focus of this class was to get us grounded in preaching Law and Gospel. Because this is what God's Word is, it is how we read and understand it.

The Word of God kills and makes alive. The Law, being that which kills, last Sunday we heard Pastor Lew talk about the young man who was cut to the core by the Law... you could say that his sinful self was killed by the crushing weight of God's Word of Law. But we have all felt

this similar feeling. We are all familiar with this. That feeling like you got we got the win knocked out of us. Not being able to sleep at night... It is this feeling of the law killing us.

But God does not abandon us, we are not left lying dead in our sins. While God's Law kills... God also makes us alive. In our Gospel reading today we hear Jesus proclaim this truth. "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it... "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

This is the Gospel. Notice the language here... who is doing the raising... who is giving the life. It is not by our choice, it is not by how good we are, or by our church attendance. It is not by how many of the 10 commandments we keep... It is God, sending his Son to die for his creation. It is the Word becoming flesh, it is Jesus, who has the authority to make alive. It is Jesus doing all of the work for us, we are completely uninvolved. It is God the Father who loved the world, sending his Son, who died for us, and who sends His spirit to us giving us faith in Him. This is the Gospel.

When I was in college I worked as a painter for a factory during the summer. I still remember my very first day of work there. My boss, who I had just met that morning told me to paint some things that were in the shop. He told me to paint them safety yellow. He left for a meeting and left me there alone on my first day. Not knowing where he went, or where anything was, but I figured how hard could it be? I found the paint, and I mixed it, then I

opened it and found a tray to pour it out in. I pour the paint, but instead of the paint going into the tray, it trickles down the side, and to my dismay, and panic, I look down and there is a pool of safety yellow paint right in the middle of the shop floor.

I immediately begin to scramble. My mind is racing, oh my goodness, my first job and I spill the paint. I am going to get fired, I can't even pour paint into a tray. While at the same time I am looking around, aimlessly trying to find something to clean the paint up with, but I can't find anything... While in the middle of my desperation to find something, my boss walks back in and startles me. I look at him, and he asks me if everything is going ok? In my mind I immediately think... "I am dead..." Then he looks at the paint on the floor, and back at me. Instead of blowing a gasket at the new guy, lashing out, getting mad, or making some snarky comment, he instead grabs some rags and cleans the floor for me...

For an 18-year-old who is terrified of losing his job, feeling inadequate, and like a failure, this act was an act of grace. My boss had no responsibility to clean up the mess that I had made. I am the one who made the mistake, I am the one who should have been cleaning up the mess myself, but instead, he cleaned it up for me.

This story is a representation of the Gospel... But the Gospel is so much more than spilled paint, it is so much more than my boss cleaning it up for me... You see, we as sinners are a whole lot messier than a puddle of paint on the floor. We aren't just a mess that can be cleaned up, but instead we are dead... we can do nothing at all! But this is the Gospel... While we are dead in our sins, God raises us up and gives us life through His Son Jesus.

See...The Law always accuses... It always demands something from us... It tells us we need to do this... But the beauty of the Gospel... is that it demands nothing, it is freely given, and undeserved. It is Christ saying to each and every one of us dead people... "Get up and walk." The Gospel is the only thing that gives us life. It is Christ dying our death on the cross, the one that we deserved, so that we do not have to pay the price. The Gospel of Jesus is the only thing that makes us alive.

The Gospel is the reason that we gather here every Sunday. We come together to hear God's Word, to be killed and then raised to life. We gather here to receive the Gospel through Christ's Body and Blood. We come to remember the day when our old sinful self-died and was raised back to life in the waters of our Baptism. The Gospel can be summed up in one word... "Arise." Because this Gospel is Jesus telling us to rise up from the grave of our sin.

As we celebrate this 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, we remember this Gospel. We remember God's Word, that His Word alone, is how we know Him. That His word alone kills us and makes us alive. And we proclaim this life to all people. We continue to share the news of Jesus and the life that he gives. And so we go in peace today and every other day, for we are no longer dead, but alive.