

God's Word is Truth – Pentecost 6

Genesis 19:15-28; Psalm 105:1-11; Romans 8:26-39; Matthew 13:44-58

Remember recently I preached about the Word of God being a lamp to our feet and a light to our path?

God's Word is truth.

God's Word is life.

Last week I heard a story from the granddaughter of a man who was fully turned around by the Word of God. He was 17 or 18 years old and was in the choir at church, he was a leader in the Youth group an active member of the church. But he felt it didn't mean anything to him. He was just doing it. So he went to his rector and said that he was going to leave the church. The rector listened to him and saw that he had his mind made up and so just asked him to wait until after the mission coming up in a week's time. The young man agreed and also met up with one of the mission people for a one to one talk. There the mission chap opened the Bible and asked the young man to read Rom 10:9

“That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved.”

The young man read it out and just looked at the older man. So the older man said read it again and he did but still looked blank. So the mission chap said 'read it again' and the young man did and as he read it for the third time suddenly the truth hit him and those words became life to him. He became a follower of Jesus from that moment. From being about to leave the church that one Bible verse spoke so profoundly to him of God's love that he went into the ministry and served God faithfully for his whole life. And that verse still retained power for him all his life, and brought to salvation many he passionately shared it with.

Have you ever had a word or revelation that made a massive difference to your life?

I believe the writer of Psalm 105 had discovered a simple truth, as had David and all his psalmists. For it is a truth that appears over and over in the Psalms and it has quite clearly captured those who wrote it in such a profound way that it is taught and prayed and praised over and over. It is written with an imperative – a' hey make sure you get this!!' “ hey – this is absolutely important!”

Lets look at the Psalm. What are the words of life spoken in it?

Verse 1: is simply telling us to declare out thanks to the Lord. Yes - We too can do that.

It also says to call upon the Lord's name. We too can do that.

Verse 2: says to sing praise to God, and specifically for His wonderful acts. We too can do that.

Verse 3: tells us to let our hearts rejoice and to glory in God's Holy Name. We too can do that.

Verse 4: look to the Lord and His strengths, seek His face always. We too can do that.

Verse 5: remember the wonders He has done. We too can do that.

Did you notice the number of times I said "we too can do that"? But the Psalm is not saying we can do it – it is saying do it.

Do it!

For if we believe it in our hearts and declare it with our lips we act like we believe it too and that activates faith. God is so pleased when we act in faith. If we believe God is strong, and stronger than us we will look to Him and for His strength in us.

For His Word is truth.

The Psalms are prayers. Prayers put to song. What we pray reflects what we believe. What we believe affects how we act and what we do.

If we believe as our Romans 8 reading tells us *"that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him"* we will expect good to come out of difficult and even painful and shocking situations. We will join the Psalmist in giving thanks even when we don't feel like it. And we will in every situation be able to give thanks for as God's word tells us *"this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."*

1 Thess 5: 16-18 *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

I read a section from a book called From Prison to Praise (pp73ff) where the chap has such a conversion that he literally went from an army prison to becoming, with time, an army chaplain.

He discovered the power of praise and thanksgiving and when led by God used it in his role as chaplain.

One day a man called Ron came to see him and asked his help because he had just got his orders to go to Vietnam and his wife was suicidal. So the chaplain told Ron to send his wife to see him. And I pick the story up from there.

Sue was a picture of misery. Her body was frail and she sat on the edge of a chair trembling from head to foot. Tears flowed uncontrollably down her face. 'Chaplain'. Her voice was barely audible. 'I'm scared; I can't live without Ron.'

I looked at her and a wave of compassion brought the tears to my eyes. I knew Sue's story. She'd been adopted as a baby, was estranged from her adopted family, and had no one in the world except Ron. The two of them were very much in love and I knew that if Ron went to Vietnam, Sue would stay alone in a rented room in a strange town.

I prayed silently for wisdom to comfort her.

'Tell her to be thankful.' I shook my head in disbelief. I must have heard wrong.

'Her Lord?'

'Yes, you may begin to share with her!' I looked at Sue's tearful face and my heart sank.

'Okay, Lord, I'll trust You'.

'Sue, I'm glad you came.' I said, smiling with a confidence I didn't feel. 'You don't have anything to worry about. Everything is going to be alright'.

Sue straightened herself, wiped away her tears, and managed a trembling little smile.'

I continued: 'what I want you to do is to kneel here with me and thank God that Ron is going to Vietnam,'

She looked at me in blank disbelief. I nodded. 'Yes, Sue, I want you to thank God.'

She immediately began to weep almost hysterically. I calmed her as best I could and began reading to her the verses I had learned to trust in over the last few months.

'...in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you... 'all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.' Carefully I tried to show her the wonderful truths I had found to be real.

Well, Sue leaves his office in despair and her husband comes in the next day and says 'what did you do to my wife chaplain?' And he gets the same

message to give thanks to God that he is going to Vietnam and that his wife is suicidal.

The chaplain asks God if he blew it and believes God says to have patience.

Two days later the two of them come back quite desperate and they get the same message to kneel and give thanks together and trust God is working it out for good for them.

The husband says to his wife 'what have we got to lose? And so they both unconvincedly pray thanks again with the chaplain and go off.

The chaplain says that later he got to hear what happened and I quote from that part now.

After they left him Ron and Sue went into the chapel and knelt together at the altar. There they had turned their lives and each other over to God in a deeper commitment than ever before and now Sue had the strength to pray: 'God thank You that Ron is going to Vietnam. You know how much I will miss him. You know I don't have a father or mother or brother or sister or family of any kind. I will trust You Lord.' Ron prayed a similar prayer and had to go back to his unit. Sue went back to the waiting room next to the chaplain's office and a young soldier came in looking distressed and asking for the chaplain.

When he said that his wife wanted a divorce she tells him *'it won't do you much good to see that chaplain!*

Then the soldier starts showing her photos of his family and she sees one of her mother. The upshot of the story is that the soldier sitting there, talking to her, turns out to be her birth brother. And as her husband left her in the chapel he ran into a friend who asked him to join the legal office and so Ron wasn't sent to Vietnam after all. Sue's life was transformed and she had a joyous confidence in her faith and went about praising God from that time on.¹

God's Word brought life and truth to them, even though it seemed to be the opposite of what was needed at the time. Even though the situation seemed impossible in the natural.

The Bible is God's inspired Word to us and is appropriate for any and every situation. The reading of it in partnership with the Holy Spirit helps build our faith and feed us on the journey. Reading and studying it together grows our fellowship and links us as the body of Christ. The Bible informs our prayer life

¹ Merlin Carothers Prison to Praise (pp73ff)

like no other way, especially in the call to give thanks at all times and to pray continually.

Today we are reassured in Rom 8: 26 that when we don't know what to pray the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. It assures us that God knows our heart and the Spirit will pray and intercede through us for the saints. Have you got someone you are concerned about and don't know how to pray anymore? Take God at His word and ask the Spirit to pray for that person through the words He gives you. Let God's word be life and truth for them.

Let God's word speak deeply to our hearts, & receive it in.

Rom 8: 37 *In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*

When we receive this word and believe it we will respond like the Psalmist and give thanks when things seem to be overwhelming us. We can kneel like the people in that Prison to Praise story and say "thank you Lord that in all things I am more than a conqueror through You who loves me."

Do you have a situation that is getting the better of you? At work? At Home? At church?

Use the Word as a proactive weapon. For it brings life. "Thank You Lord that I am more than a conqueror in this situation because You love me."

When feeling alone, speak out with thanks: *Nothing will be able to separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (v39).* For we are assured that no trouble, hardship persecution or famine or nakedness danger or sword will ever separate us from God's love. V 35

Now that is good news! That is truth. These are words of life!

As I finish I invite us all to spend a minute looking at the verses in the Romans reading and ask the Holy Spirit to light one of them up to each of us and then pray it silently as a prayer of thanks. Eg v 31 'Thank you Lord that you are 'for' me, totally 'for' me.' V 39 'Thank You Lord that nothing can separate me from your love.'

Let us pray: