

Text: 1Peter 1:23-25

I. N. I.

Sermon #1917

Praise and thanks to You, Lord, our God, because You have granted us Your Word which shows, *yes, even gives* us the way of salvation, *namely Christ Jesus Himself*. By Your Holy Spirit work effectually in us through this Your Word, that it may prove in us a living and fruitful seed bringing *forth* a hundredfold, and that the fruit remain to eternal life. Amen. (Reading the Psalms with Luther, CPH, Ps. 84, p. 201)

[Y]ou have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.*

In Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh, who to the end of the age dwells among us with His grace, dear fellow redeemed:

We heard the parable of the Sower in today's Gospel lesson along with Jesus' explanation. But even with that we can so easily be distracted by the account of the condition of the various types of soil. By doing so we become introspective considering how we might become the good soil, worthy of God to do His work in us. Rather it is the strength and power of the seed we should focus on foremost. In truth, the condition of the soil of our hearts changes on account of our sin and influence of the unbelieving world around us. Repentance is called for, not self-improvement. God will do His powerful work upon, in and through us. Let us recognize this in the words of our text and take note: **The Imperishable Living Word of God Gives Life Everlasting.**

I

We normally associate the expression being "*born-again*" with holy baptism and that is understandable, since Jesus clearly taught Nicodemus: "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God ... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." It is true that our regeneration produced by the Spirit, giving us new life in Christ Jesus our Savior is attributed to this Sacrament. But as we read in our text it also occurs apart from this Sacrament. "You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

It is this same powerful living Word of God in baptism that the waters become gracious waters for us sinners. However the power of the word without the water gives new birth as well. Therefore a person deprived of baptism can still be saved through the faith created by the Spirit through the Word. On the other hand, once faith in Christ is created through the hearing of the Word, the believing repentant sinner will desire to be baptized in accordance with Jesus' requirement for all nations. One who despises holy baptism, despises the Lord who commands it, and therefore does not have the faith in Jesus which alone saves.

Now lest we think it is any word quoted from the Holy Scriptures which gives life, Peter clearly identifies which Word he is speaking about: "this word is the good news that was preached to you." It is the Gospel - the good news that God loves us in His Son and that through His holy life, sacrificial death and conquering resurrection, we are justified before God.

It is not even a direct quote, which is the Gospel. The Gospel is spoken by you – Christ's Church, often in your own words. As forgiveness, life and salvation in Jesus, the Savior of all people, is declared by you, the Spirit is at work upon all who hear it. This has been working this way for you ever since that Word came to you creating faith in you, whether it was spoken with the water, or just the Word alone.

It continues to give you life, as heard again and again, even as received with that bread and wine, since Christ's true body and blood are the very tangible Word. It is the very body given unto death, the very blood shed unto death for you and all sinners.

God's Law is written on your hearts my fellow sinners. And while we need to hear the Law of God regularly as well, the Law does not give life, rather it condemns and kills. So our Lord has instituted the delivery system to overcome what comes so naturally

to you. He wants the Gospel declared to you from without from those called by Him to declare it to you, so that it can break through that word which comes from within. He connects it as well with water, bread and wine. He even gives you your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, who in their conversations and consolations, have spoken and written, on various occasions, the Gospel of your salvation.

II

How does the imperishable nature of God's Word give you comfort? It stands in contrast with you and me, sinners that we are, as Peter points out: "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls." We may all have our day in the sun, perhaps in our youth, when we seem so invincible, in charge of where we are going in life. Or maybe it is at the time of our retirements, when we feel healthy enough to sit back and enjoy the life of ease. But regardless how we may feel at any stage of life, it can only to be compared with the flower of grass. We still age, begin to diminish and what was seen by others as a promising vibrant bloom in this life, falls away as we wither away.

Death hounds each and everyone of us the moment we first possess life in this world, but we can be deceived by the vigor of

youth and deceive many others as a result. But the day of reckoning is coming. Death abides in all sinners, and not just the count down to our physical death, but the eternal death earned by all sinners.

The Word of God, the living imperishable Word, gives life to sinners who have this death abiding in them. Understand what this means: an unbeliever is dead, even if his body is still alive; a believer, on the other hand, is alive, even if his body is dead. Jesus tells Martha this the day He came to Bethany to raise her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. “ ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.’”

Often times we speak of Christians who have died that their souls now have entered eternity, but technically Jesus informs us that we possess eternal life even now in this life through faith in Him as Savior. He taught us saying: “whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me **has eternal life** (not will have). He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (already).” You have heard the life giving word, of God’s love for you in His Son, you believe and therefore live eternally right here and now.

You might also remember when many from the crowd of 5,000 who had been miraculously fed the day before heard Jesus' saying that unless a sinner were to eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, he has no life in him, they declared "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" They then turned back and no longer walked with Jesus. Jesus turned to His twelve and asked them: "Do you want to go away as well?" Peter spoke up and said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!" So Peter's words in our text reflect this same blessed teaching and trust that he had life graciously given to him through the Word of Christ.

Do you believe these things? – that Christ has saved you from all your sins, death and hell? If so, you have been born again by this same word of life and have all the blessings promised through it – including everlasting life. The Apostle Paul recognizes the same through those familiar words from Romans 10: "Faith comes (not just came, but comes, continually comes) from hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ." Continue to hear the Gospel proclaimed to you, my fellow redeemed and live, for Jesus' sake. Amen.