

Pentecost 4
June 17, 2018

Colossians 1:3-8
576-544-309/304-323

God's Word Works!

- I. Gratefully see this in your own life.
- II. Confidently share God's Word with others.

Dear Christian friends,

Put yourself in **Jonah's** shoes in the OT reading. God has commanded you to **go and preach** to the people of Nineveh. You're the **ONLY** missionary in a totally heathen city – the capital of your **worst enemy**. As you spend the days and weeks **travelling** there can you picture Jonah thinking, "This is **RIDICULOUS!** Nobody's going to **listen** to me. This is a **TOTAL WASTE** of time"?

Put yourself in the shoes of a **Christian parent**. God has commanded you to **"bring up your children in the training and instruction of the Lord."** You take that seriously as you should. You faithfully bring your children to church. You give them a **solid** Christian education. You try hard to set them a **godly example** at home. But will it really do ANY GOOD? **Or** will your children be like so many others who have fallen away from their Lord?

Look again at what happened in **Nineveh** – or at all those children who do **remain faithful** to Jesus – who grow up into **responsible** Christian adults and are now raising their own **Christian families**. **OR** look at these Colossian Christians. **GOD'S WORD WORKS!** It really does! 1)Gratefully see this in **your own** life and 2)confidently share God's Word with others.

I. Gratefully see this in your own life.

As far as we know Paul never worked in the city of Colosse. But on his third missionary journey Paul **had worked** in the city of Ephesus for over **two years**. Colosse is one hundred miles or so **east** of Ephesus in **west-central** Turkey. **EVIDENTLY** some had heard God's Word from **Paul in Ephesus** – gone back to Colosse – and there under the leadership of a man named **"Epaphras"** – a Christian congregation had started.

Later in this letter Paul mentions that he had **"not personally met"** many of the members of this congregation. But he **HAS HEARD** about them! **"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope that is stored up for you in heaven."** Imagine having an apostle write this ABOUT YOU and **at God's command!** God's Word was **AT WORK** in Colosse! God's Word is **ALSO AT WORK** right here at St. John's, Fox Lake, WI, **2,000 years** later. Gratefully see God's WORD AT WORK in **your own** life. You do see that, don't you?

LIKE these Colossian Christians do you have **"faith in Christ Jesus"**? Do you believe that that MAN Jesus of Nazareth is in fact the **eternal** SON of God born a true man? **Do you believe** that Jesus came here sent by His Father to be the Savior of the world – your OWN PERSONAL Savior? **Do you believe** that Jesus lived for you that **holy** and **perfect** life you owed God but never could live? **Do you believe** that Jesus suffered and died on the cross to **personally pay** for all your sins – yes, that **"the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses (you) from all sin"**? Do you believe that Jesus rose triumphant from the dead and now lives nevermore to die? **THANK GOD** that **you believe** that! Understand that the **ONLY REASON you believe** in Jesus is because **GOD'S WORD WORKS**. God works that faith in people's hearts **ONLY THROUGH** His Word.

Only God can see that **faith in our hearts** – but that faith in our hearts will show up in our **everyday** lives – in **LIVES OF LOVE**. **"We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints."** Our faith is **INVISIBLE** – our love is **VISIBLE**. We don't love so we can be **NOTICED** and **appreciated**. We love others as a **NATURAL RESPONSE** to **Jesus loving** us. **"We**

love because (God) first loved us.” That love can show itself in SO MANY different ways. The possibilities are almost ENDLESS. Pitching in at church – visiting the sick and shut-ins – praying for others, our country, etc. – helping mom around the house – encouraging someone who’s **struggling** with whatever, etc. In Christian love we PUT OTHERS **ahead** of ourselves. We drop the “**What’s** in it FOR ME?” – the “I’ve done enough already.” **In Christian love** we simply ask, “HOW can I help?” Do you see such Christian love showing up in your life? THANK God! That’s God’s WORD AT WORK in your heart!

“We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope that is stored up for you in heaven. You have already heard about this in the word of truth, the gospel that is present with you now.” Trusting in Jesus we have the BLESSED HOPE – we are confidently looking forward – to **going straight** to heaven when we die. That’s going to be SO NEAT – so FANTASTIC! One minute we’re here – the next we’re **at Jesus’ side** in His heavenly glory – we’re in that place He **“has prepared for us in His Father’s house”** – He’s **“wiped every tear from our eyes.”** We’re reunited with our **Christian** loved ones never to be parted again. NEVER AGAIN will we be tempted by the **devil** – bothered by the **world** – struggling against our **sinful nature**. IS THAT what you’re looking forward to when you die? THANK God – God’s WORD worked that hope in your heart!

But there’s something else I see **when I look** at MY heart and life. MY FAITH in Jesus – it’s not always so **very strong**. Instead of confidently trusting Jesus I **sometimes** WONDER about His **ways** – doubt His **love** – question His **will**. MY LOVE – **too often** I’m more in love with **myself**. I can be lazy – **petty - selfish**. If I can’t have MY WAY then there’s no way I’ll help. I hurt people by **how I talk** TO them and ABOUT them. MY HOPE of heaven – too often I’m ALL WRAPPED UP in this life and forget about heaven. I’m more focused on the **weather** report – the **stock market** – the **Packers** – then I am on my soul’s salvation.

That’s being honest. That calls for REPENTANCE. But there’s no need to **despair**. We are all WORKS IN PROGRESS. God is not done working on us. That’s all the more reason to BE IN God’s Word – faithfully coming to church – having those **daily devotions**. That’s giving God more opportunities TO WORK on us **through His Word**. THANK God that His Word is at work in **your** life. THANK God that’s He’s not done working on **you!**

In fact, God is not only at work ON us – God also wants to work THROUGH us. Because GOD’S WORD WORKS...

II. Confidently share God’s Word with others.

Share God’s Word with others CONFIDENT that you will run into trouble – **have problems** – that not everyone will BE THRILLED to **hear** what God says. Sharing God’s Word will **not be one stunning success** after another. God never promised us that. Reread Jesus’ parable of the Sower and the Seed. **“SOME seed fell on good ground and produced a crop.”** OTHER seed never took root or it didn’t have deep enough roots or it got **“choked out by the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth.”** Look at Jesus’ own ministry – SOME listened – many more walked away from Jesus. Recall Jesus telling His disciples, **“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first.”**

Or take Paul. Paul wrote this letter while **imprisoned** in Rome. Paul had been in prison for **several years** all because he shared God’s Word with others. If Paul had just kept his MOUTH SHUT – if he had just toned things down some – he could have SAVED HIMSELF **so much trouble**. But God calls us to BE FAITHFUL – **not popular**. God’s WORD WORKS – but sometimes it works trouble for us!

Paul wrote this letter because there were **some troubles** in this congregation in Colosse. **Epaphras** had traveled some **1,300 miles** to Rome for Paul’s help and **guidance**. False teachers were **at work** in Colosse trying to lead these young Christians AWAY from Jesus – telling them that **God’s Word**

WASN'T ENOUGH for them – that their simple trust in Jesus WASN'T ENOUGH to save them. BE CONFIDENT that where God is at work through His Word the devil is also RIGHT THERE working hard to THWART God's saving plans.

Yet be confident as you share God's Word with others. God's WORD WORKS! It worked in Paul's heart and life and ministry. It worked in Colosse – and NOT JUST there. ***“The gospel is bearing fruit and growing in the entire world, just as it also has been doing among you from the day you heard it and came to know the grace of God in truth.”*** God has promised us that His Word ***“will not return to (Him) empty, but will accomplish what (He) desires and achieve the purpose for which (He) sent it.”***

“In the entire world,” Paul wrote. MARVEL at that. From that small handful of Christians in **Jerusalem** HOW QUICKLY God's Word ***“spread and grew”*** – moving from city to city – country to country. Read again Paul's **missionary journeys** – trace his trips on a map. ADD to **Paul's work** the countless, unnamed Christians who QUIETLY yet CONFIDENTLY shared God's Word as they moved and traveled. See God's Word SPREAD from Jerusalem ***“into all the world”*** JUST AS God wants.

God's WORD WORKS – and what a privilege and joy to be A PART in **spreading** God's Word! TREASURE THE PRIVILEGE of bring your children up IN God's Word – bringing them up AS GOD'S children. **Treasure the privilege** of sharing your Jesus with your neighbors and friends. Treasure the privilege of HAVING and SUPPORTING our Christian grade school and high school so we can give our children and grandchildren a SOLID **Christian** education. **Treasure the privilege** of PRAYING for and SUPPORTING our work together as the Wisconsin Synod – training future pastors and teachers – opening and supporting mission work here at home and around the world. The devil will try whatever it takes TO DISCOURAGE us and THWART God's plans. But rejoice – be confident! God's WORD WORKS! Gratefully see that in **your own** life – and ***“in the entire world.”*** Amen.

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