

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Pentecost 8 August 7, 2011 *Isaiah 55:10,11*



¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God

There was an article on the Internet last week called *My 52 Weeks of Worship!* It was written by a lady named Pamay. She had suffered terrible losses – one after the other. First her Grandma – her only surviving grandparent in Nigeria – fell out of bed – on her head. It bled inside and she died! Then her dad – a physician – died from a very painful kind of cancer. Then her boyfriend of four years – left her. Grandma – gone! Dad – gone! Sweetheart – gone! That was bad enough. In her heart of hearts – she *felt* like God was gone, too. And so she set out to find Him. Hence *My 52 Weeks of Worship* – actually 61 stops – around the world – looking for God! She looked in all kinds of places. She joined in African worship – rows of white plastic patio chairs for pews – but no one is seated. Everyone is dancing and singing – overflowing with joy for hour after hour of heartfelt worship. She is up with the sun as monks in “flowing, orange, floor-length robes hold prayer beads in their hands and wear them around their necks.” She goes to temples with nine sides – where people try to combine all they cherry pick as the best from all the world great religions – as if doctrine were like a spiritual salad bar. Pamay spent time with Jehovah’s Witnesses and Unitarians, Wiccans – who have gone over to the dark side – yet claiming to worship mother earth – mother nature – practicing “white” magic – all things organic and natural – healing the planet – plants and all creatures achieving oneness! She worshiped with Zoroastrians. What do you know of the Creator Ahura Mazda – and the ultimate struggle between good and evil? Where is one to look? The answer to who is God – and where is He – and what happens when you die – is to be found in the Bible – the Holy Scriptures – the very Word of God. This 8th Sunday after Pentecost – God’s Word reminds us of a fundamental essential truth:

God’s Word Works!

1. It changes my ♥
2. It changes the whole world!

When you go to the Seminary you take lots of different classes. You take Isagogics. That’s a class where you go through a book of the Bible – maybe Ezekiel – chapter after chapter – seeing the wonder of God’s Wisdom – law and gospel again and again. We study Exegesis – that is a word for word dissection of the Scriptures. We take each word and see what part of speech. One of the most

wondrous things about the New Testament is the Greek language it is written in – Koine Greek. Koine! Remember the Christian concert we had in the St. Luke’s parking lot on a beautiful Friday evening? Koine – common people – who sang common--traditional hymns – with rich theological messages of law and gospel – in all different kinds of arrangements – different accompaniment – all different styles. *Koine* Greek – common every-day Greek is incredibly precise – especially the verbs. There are verbs that mean the action happens now – the results continue into the future. There are verbs that mean don’t worry about *when* it happens. Just take note of *what* happens – what’s going on here. Time isn’t important here – *action* is! When people say there are all kinds of religions and denominations – because that’s *your* interpretation – that isn’t completely true. There are all kinds of religions and denominations – because people take God’s Word and twist it – and abuse it – to make it say what they want to say. God’s Word is very clear. It’s people that mess it up! We study Dogmatics – Systematic Theology – organized – every passage in God’s Word – concerning angels, concerning original sin, concerning end times and judgment day and heaven and hell. We study Apologetics – the defense of the truth of God’s Word against false prophets who attack the truth and would mislead through blatant lies – and far more insidious – through half-truths – lots and lots of truth with just a sprinkling of soul destroying poison of lies. Remembering the devil is the father of lies! At the Seminary we study *Hermeneutics!* That’s all about our principles – our presuppositions – the truths we understand and agree upon – before we even start studying Scripture. Like – we believe the Bible is God’s Word – not just contains – like fruit salad – contains fruit – and contains marshmallows – but the Bible is God’s Word – every Word! We believe the Bible is true in everything it says – everything! That means it’s true in everything it says about God-stuff – but also true in everything it says about geography for example. If the Bible says there was a certain city in a certain place – there was! We don’t have to be able to dig up ruins before we believe it. And the absence of ruins doesn’t mean the Bible got it wrong. It’s the same with Kings. If the Bible says there was a certain King – there was – even if some earthly historical list doesn’t mention him. If the Bible talks about floods or earthquakes or fires or disasters – plague and drought, famine and pestilence – it’s all true! Our hermeneutic says – the Bible cannot contradict itself. You can’t understand one verse here – in a way that contradicts another verse somewhere else! If part of Scripture is difficult to understand – most often the simplest explanation is the best. Sometimes you hear people say – we take God’s Word literally! We would respectfully say – literal is good – when it’s literal and figurative is good when it’s figurative! Raining cats and dogs does not mean puppies and kittens are falling out of the sky. When the Bible talks about 144,000 are saved it doesn’t mean there are only 144,000 people in Heaven. It means a complete number – all the people that are going to Heaven – no one missed – no one left out!

We also believe God’s Word is sufficient and effective. God’s Word works! That’s precisely what Isaiah is talking about when he says, ¹⁰ **"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater...** We haven’t had very much rain lately – and our lawn is kind of ~~crinkly~~ – it goes dormant--kind of creamy brown colored. And then the rains fall – a gentle soaker rain is best. And the next thing you know – it’s soft and green and tickles between your toes and it grows! Our

neighborhood is filled with the sound of lawnmowers – and weed whackers everywhere! When it doesn't rain very much – and you buy sweet corn – they say the cobs are kind of short – but the sweet corn is pretty sweet! Then come years when it rains a lot – and the cobs are big – and the corn is sweet, too! When it rains a lot you can buy peaches – and they are so juicy – the juice literally runs down your chin and down your arm! Strawberries and raspberries and blackberries are juicy and sweet! The rain works! It makes the trees grow – the grass grows – the flowers grow! And God's Word works, too! It accomplishes the purpose for which God sends it!

¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. God's Word works. It comforts us when we are troubled by terrible guilt. Just the other day – two pilots – named Mitchell and Don – were flying a duplicate of the original Wright Brothers' plan when they crashed by corn fields just 3 miles from the airport. They both died! This is not the first time someone was killed in a Wright Brothers' plane. All the way back in 1908 on September 17th – Wilbur was flying their original plane – with his best friend Thomas as a passenger. Oh, they had flown their plane literally thousands of times – making many improvements. They had flown as long as 38 minutes straight – flown as far as 24 miles. What could go wrong? They were flying way up there – 150 feet – more than 5 times as high as the peak of our Church – when the blade of one of the propellers broke and they crashed! Wilbur was seriously injured. His friend Thomas was killed – the first ever air plane crash fatality! How guilty would you feel? We should have made the propeller better! We should have flown higher and faster – then when something went wrong – we would have had more time to glide to a safe landing. We should have had more protection built in – so we would have been safe – and now it's too late! Guilt – remorse and regret are terrible crushing burdens! It's all because of sin – the wrongful attitude hardwired into our hearts and minds. It's all because of sins – the failures and mistakes – the painful hurtful things we do – and the kind and thoughtful things we don't do. We are guilty – to blame and without excuse. I saw an intervention on TV the other day – a father and an estranged son – separated for years and years – because the father shot the mom 2 times – taking her life! All the son wanted was his father to take responsibility – to tell the truth and say he was to blame – without excuse to accept blame and say he was sorry. And the father wouldn't – as if he could not simply say – "It's my fault. I am without excuse. I'm to blame. I'm sorry!" No – it was the mom's fault – at least in part for what – for drinking – for arguing – for making him angry – for making him jealous! When the Holy Spirit fills our heart – we can admit our sins and failures and mistakes – without making excuses or blaming others. We can admit our sins – knowing Jesus has washed them all away with his innocent blood shed for us on the cross! Knowing Jesus' forgiving love – drives away all our doubts and fears! God's Word works!

¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Sometimes we watch *Chopped!* It's a program where 4 chefs get mystery baskets filled with very strange ingredients like fish cheeks – or soft shell crabs that are still alive – or fruits and vegetables I have never ever heard of! Four chefs make an appetizer – three snooty chefs pick at their food and find fault. One contestant gets chopped! Three make an entrée – nibbles and complaints – another

contestant gets chopped! Two contestants left – to make a dessert out of goofy ingredients. One chef was a Christian – from a Christian camp – praying that his cooking would give glory to Jesus and the \$10,000 prize money would help his family! The other finalist was from France – and needed to win the \$10,000 so she could go back to France – to visit her grandmother before she died! We are thinking – this is a win, win – two very nice people – two very nice outcomes! The Christian chef wins – the French lady looks sad. In a moment – the Christian chef says, “One moment, please! I want to give part of the prize to you – enough for you to fly to France and back – to visit your grandmother!” Did you ever see that? Someone wins on a game show – and before they can even say why you won or how much you won – you say I want to give part of the prize to the person who lost? Did you ever see that? I didn’t! At the same time I’m not surprised! Not really surprised at all – because that’s exactly what you do when you have Jesus in your heart. You give and you share. You are exceedingly generous – because you know for a fact that Jesus will always take very good care of you! God’s Word works! It works forgiveness and kindness and generosity in your heart for Jesus’ sake. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony F. Schultz