

Come to Us through the Word

Wednesday, 12/4 at 11:00 & 7:00

First Wednesday in Advent – 2019

Advent Wednesdays: Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear Bethlehem – *and others who might hear or read:* This sermon is meant ♦for me, ♦for you, and ♦for everyone else as well. It is meant to ✓catch our attention, ✓teach us some important realities, and ✓challenge our current practices and priorities!

In this sermon, I will ➡touch on the Parable of the sower, ➡mention some of what God does through His Word, and ➡give some Word-usage advice.

1. **The Parable of the Sower:** Earlier I read Jesus' story ([Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23](#)) – how the man went out to sow seed, and how, *in three of the four examples*, the seed fell in places where it ☹did not grow or ☹did not *continue to grow*. Then Jesus explained the story.
 - a. Let's think about it:
 - i. **What does the seed represent?** *It represents THE WORD OF GOD!*
 - ii. **What do the four places represent?** ♦By the road, ♦in the shallow soil, ♦among the thorns, and ♦in the good soil; what do those four places represent? *They represent THE HEARTS OF VARIOUS PEOPLE WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD!*

b. Something very significant: Let me explain:

- i. **If you are hearing this sermon at Bethlehem**: *You are included in the parable, and have a 25% chance of benefitting from the Word of God. Why? Remember Jesus' story: ALL HEARD the Word of God, *but only 1 of 4 benefitted!**
- ii. **If you are listening to this sermon through our website or podcast, or reading a printed copy**: *You are also included in the parable, and have a 25% chance of benefitting from the Word of God.*
- iii. **The others**: What about the people who never hear or read the Bible in a serious way? Their chance of benefitting is 0%.

c. However, there is still good news: Why?
Because ✦ God still loves us, ✦ Jesus has taken away the sin of the world, and ✦ we have many opportunities to benefit from God's Holy Word!

2. **What God Does Through His Word**: *When we are in the Word of God **in a serious way**, God the Father through the Holy Spirit gives these blessings:*

- a. **Makes spiritually alive**: ^{NIV} **James 1:18** [God] chose to give us [spiritual] birth through the word of truth... // As God gives physical life through a man and a woman, *so God gives spiritual life through His Word!*
- b. **Sets free from condemnation**: ^{NAS} **John 8:32** [Jesus said:] *...you shall know the truth, and the*

truth shall make you free. // Are you ✦free through God's truth or ✦wearing eternal chains? The answer is **not in how we feel, but in what God's Word says**, so let us dig it and find out!

- c. **Builds up and gives eternal blessings:** ^{ESV} **Acts 20:32** [Paul to the Pastors serving in Ephesus:] ... I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. // God wants to ✦move us **from weak to strong** and ✦bless us forever! *He does that important and blessed work through His Word!*

3. **Some Word-Usage Advice:** Be aware that many powerful forces will seek to stop us from using from God's Word. Jesus, *in His story*, identified: The devil, our sinful hearts, and the fallen world. When we don't feel like being in God's Word, *we can be sure that one or more of those powerful forces are at work!* **But God is greater**, so I challenge all of us to consistently receive the Word of God in ALL of these ways:

- a. **Divine Service** – *at least once each week, twice each week during Advent and Lent!* Why? God works through Word and Sacrament ✓ to remind us who we are in Christ, ✓ remind us of our sins, ✓ call us to be sorry, ✓ assure us of His forgiveness, ✓ strengthen us in Christ, and ✓ equip us for works of service. Are those the reasons why you attend? Right now we have 4 opportunities each week, so plan on SA or SU, and 11 or 7 on WE; also, expect resistance, *but remember that **God is greater!***

- b. **Bible Class** – *at least once each week*: Why? The Bible is our sword – *the sword of the Spirit!* We need that sword because of our enemies: ☹️The devil—*who wants to eat us for breakfast*, ☹️the sinful world around us, and ☹️the sinful nature within us. Imagine being in a sword fight... your opponent has a *sharp 30-inch sword*, while you have *dull 6-inch sword*... NOT GOOD! Therefore, plan to attend on TH at 10 – *at BLC or online*, SA at 3, or SU at 10:30. *God WILL bless you!*
- c. **Daily Devotion** – *at least once each day*: We have many options – the Bible, Portals along with the noted Bible readings, Meditations, Advent Devotional, A Closer Look at the Evidence, etc. Whenever we are in God’s Word, It is vital to ♦think, ♦understand, and ♦apply; *watch for more next week on those topics*. BTW, without daily devotion in my life, ☹️I would not be in Christ, ☹️I would not be a pastor, and ☹️I would be facing a horrible eternity!

Conclusion: Blessings or excuses – going forward, which will dominate your life? *Today is an excellent time to take the first step in a NEW DIRECTION!* If you are determined to do so, *be sure to join us next Wednesday as we pray: Come Lord Jesus, Come to Us to Change Our Hearts!!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Lord Jesus, TY for taking away our sins; keep coming to us through the Word until You come again!

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