

God's Word – Silent Power

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday before Lent



Sermon Text: Hebrews 4:12-13

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Some years ago, I was on the mountain of Masada in Israel.

There is a Jewish fortress there that was captured by the Romans around 70 AD. When the Romans succeeded in invading the fortress, all the Jewish people in Masada, including the women and children, killed themselves. They would rather die than fall into the hands of the Romans. When you are on the mountain of Masada today, you can relive this whole drama. You can imagine very well how it was back then. And yet, nothing remains from that time but old remnants: pots, pans, and bones that have been carefully restored but have nothing to do with us modern people anymore because they are dead.

So many people think that God's Word is also like this – an old book that's from another time. You can read lots of very interesting stories in this book, like the dramatic rescue of the people of Israel from Egypt or their wandering in the desert. And in the New Testament, the stories about Jesus and His miracles are extremely interesting. But they are in the past and not today and that's why we don't really care about them. We think that the stories from the Bible have nothing to do with our lives today. But that's not true. The Bible is not just an old book. It's also not just there for us to remember, either. No, the Bible is God's Living Word. And God's Word can never die nor become outdated. Just as God spoke back then, He also still speaks today. God wants to speak to you and me now. And that's exactly why we are here today.

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

We read in the Bible that the strong walls of Jericho crashed down because of God's Word alone. God's Word is the same today too. Strong walls that surrounded and trapped us are ripped apart in a matter of seconds and must come falling to the ground just because God said so.

Do you have walls in your life that restrict you?

Perhaps you can no longer endure the situation in which you find yourself. And slowly you have been looking for comforters that make your life more bearable, such as alcohol, drugs, or limitless computer games. But later, these things became a problem themselves and are now holding you captive. Now you are not only trapped by your own situation but also by addiction and you no longer know how you can be free. This is exactly what God's Word is for. God can say a word and the walls of your captivity fall down.

Perhaps the wall in your life is your past, perhaps you can't forgive people who wronged you and now you carry all this bitterness around with you. Even here, God can say a word and the walls must weaken

before God's Word and fall to the ground because no one can stop God's Word – it pierces through everything.

Of course, it's not always easy when God works on us. It sometimes hurts when I see myself in God's light. God's Word is not a sedative that makes us feel better when we're going through bad times. No, God's Word is a surgical knife that sometimes must cut. God's Word must cut out the things in our life that are not good or the things that separate us from God. These things will be cut out of our life as God's Word reveals them and we confess our sins. Naturally that hurts when you confess your sins. Of course, it's not easy to say: "I have sinned!" You could even say that it goes directly against our nature! Even the little children realize that they must hide their sins when father and mother suddenly come into their room. It's hardly surprising since the first people, Adam and Eve, did just that. Today, there is a real industry of how to fool yourself and others. You want to look good in front of others... but should I do things completely differently with my heavenly Father? Should I tell Him where my mistakes are? Yes, that's exactly what God wants! We can and may be open with Him. And that is what God gladly does through His Word. When Adam sinned for the first time, God did it like that. He did it as He called to Adam: "Adam, where are you?" And God does this still today. He calls out to us where we have hidden ourselves behind our sins. And then He exposes everything. He shows us where the problem is. However, I realize that no one can fool God. That is where the best façades fall. And I am all too aware that, measured by His Commandments, my sin is blood red. And yet I notice that there is no way past God. Without Him, I can't have peace. Everything must go through Him. I must open myself up before Him. The peace that I get before God is knowing this – not only may I, but I'm also even supposed to lay out and confess all my transgressions before Him! "See God: I am here again with all my rough edges and with my broken spirit. But for just such people like me, You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ."

Of course, people can also reject God's Word. God doesn't force anyone and yet with our rejection, the last word is not yet spoken because before us is still God's judgment seat. On that day, all of us, regardless of who we are, will be illuminated by God's bright light and we will see everything exactly as it is. Then no deception or fraud will be possible. No lie or injustice will remain standing in God's light. Everything must be revealed. This fact is both frightening and comforting. Who wants their secrets to be revealed? And who would want their secret thoughts exposed and revealed for everyone to see? But this very fact is also a great comfort because we cannot and do not need to wait for heaven until God shines into our hearts. God's Word speaks to us here and now. God's Word can wipe away all the dark things in my life in an instant, even now. I can even practice it today. For example, when I go to private confession and confess my sins before God and before the pastor, it is the same thing. In that moment, I open my heart and God examines everything with His Word and then says the words: "Your sins are forgiven!" When God says something like that, then He truly means it. That means that my sins are not only forgiven, but they are also forgotten. It means that all the walls that held me captive and surround me must fall to the ground in an instant. They must weaken in the presence of God's Word. And that means that I can start all over again. I may venture into a new life on a fresh page! That is God's Word. It is like a two-edged sword. On the one side, it exposes us and shows us what we are. On the other side, it shows us the love of Christ and shows us that Christ came for people like us. Amen.