

6 S. after Pentecost      7/12/20  
Isaiah 55:10-13          10A

SO 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 opens His mouth and His word goes forth. And that word does not return to Him empty, but rather, it accomplishes the purpose for which He sent it. His word goes forth and it succeeds in the thing for which He sent it.

We see this at the creation of the world. God opened His mouth and the word went forth, “Let there be light, let the dry ground appear, let the earth sprout vegetation, let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds” (Ge 1:3, 9, 11, 20, 24). And it all happened exactly the way He said. His word accomplished the task. His word succeeded. As the Psalm says, “For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps 33:9).

John says this, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:1, 14). That Word came forth from God as our Lord Jesus Christ. He came forth to accomplish the task His Father gave Him to do and succeed in that task. And He did that by opening His mouth and speaking the word of God from His lips.

Like the time He was in Capernaum. A Roman Centurion came to him in great distress because his servant was lying paralyzed at home, in great distress. And Jesus said, “Let’s go. Let’s go to your house and I will

heal him.” But the centurion replied, “I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.” And Jesus spoke the word and that servant was healed (cf. Mt 8:5-13).

Or, when He went to Bethany, to see Mary and Martha. Their brother, Lazarus, was dead and buried four days in the grave. Jesus spoke the word from His mouth, “Lazarus, come out”, and “the man who had died came out” (Jn 11:43-44). Jesus just spoke the word and that word did not come back empty. It accomplished its task. It succeeded in its purpose -- raising a dead man.

Isaiah tells us that the word of God works like the rain and the snow,

For as the rain and 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, so 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 (vv. 10-11).

That’s the way the word of God works. Very easy to understand. Except, when it’s not so easy to understand.

Do you remember the rich young man? He came to Jesus and asked, “What good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus calls his attention to the Commandments, especially the Commandments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Table of the Law, and the man replies, “All these I have kept.” And, Jesus opened His mouth and the word of God went forth, “Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” The word went forth from Jesus’ mouth to call that man to repentance; to call that man to discipleship. But here’s the thing -- that rich young man didn’t repent. He didn’t follow Jesus. In fact, “he went away sorrowful,” because he had great wealth (Mt 19:16-22).

And we're left scratching our heads. What a minute! The word of God goes forth and it's not supposed to come back empty. It's supposed to succeed. It is supposed to accomplish the purpose for which God sent it. And yet, it's not happening here. Jesus speaks, but this young man doesn't repent and he doesn't follow Jesus.

If you think about it, you see that more than you care to admit. God speaks His word and people are still lost and looking for direction; people are still struggling and suffering; people are still enslaved to sin. What's going on? The Word is going forth, but people are not following Jesus. The Word doesn't seem to be succeeding; it doesn't seem to be accomplishing its purpose. Why is this?

Well, it's like Isaiah says, the word of God is a lot like rain. Remember when you were a kid and you wanted to go out and play, but it was raining? All you could do was stand at the window and sing that little song,

Rain, rain, go away.  
Come again another day.  
All the family wants to play.  
Rain, rain, go away.

So often, when it comes to the word of God, we act like little children. We want to play. We want to play in our sin. We want to be under the umbrella of our sin, so that the refreshing and healing word of God cannot rain down upon us. There's a problem and the problem is not the word of God. The problem is you. The problem is that we would rather in our sin, than listen to the word of God. So much so that we become like a dry and barren wasteland, and shrivel up and die.

But Good News of the Gospel is that God sends the rain that rain falls on dry and barren wasteland like you. The rain fell that very night in

Bethlehem when the Word become flesh and dwelt among us. God sent forth His Word to accomplish, to succeed, in your salvation. The rain falls as Jesus goes around healing the sick, raising the dead, making the blind see, and the deaf hear. He goes forth, showering people with God's love. And He goes all to the cross of Calvary, where he rains down God's love upon all people, of all time, and of all places, as He suffers the wages for the sin of all the world. And the word goes forth from His mouth: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). "I thirst" (Jn 19:28). "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mt 27:46). "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Lk 23:46). "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). It is finished, because the Word of God has accomplished what He came to do.

Jesus Christ died for you and Jesus Christ rose for you. Because He did that, you have been showered with God's love. You have the forgiveness of all your sins. Forty days after He rose again, He ascended into heaven. The Word of God returned to God. But, He did not return empty. He returned in victory, in glory. And, He returned with your name on His lips. And He speaks your name to the Father, "This one is mine. This one belongs to us, Father. This one will sit at My table and feast forever and ever, without end."

But today, as we wait for the time when we will take our seat at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb in heaven, He rains down His love and His forgiveness upon you, as His word goes forth. As it did at your baptism, when He made you His own child. As it does this very day when you confess your sins and He rains down His love upon you, "I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." And that love rains down upon you as you come to His table and hear His

word, "Take, eat; take, drink; this is My body; this is My blood; given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins."

What a wonderful rain it is, this word of God. The green we see around us in nature teaches us that the wonderful rain we received produces growth. Our green paraments remind us that the refreshing word of God produces in you the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Even in our lives today, we see that God's word does not return to Him empty, but is succeeds -- it succeeds in you.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.