

December 6, 2017
Advent 1 Midweek
John 1:1-14

The advent of Christ is both in our rearview mirror and on the horizon. We look back with joy on His lowly birth of the virgin Mary, His perfect life, His sacrificial death, His resurrection to eternal life and His ascending to the Father. We look forward to His bodily coming again in glory as judge to usher in the age to come and bring our salvation to completion. But what about right now as we navigate the road of earthly life?

In God's unfathomable mercy today and every day is Advent—the advent of Christ bringing salvation to sinners.

This is important to know, because Satan's wish is for us to think we are alone in this life, fending for ourselves without a loving God caring for us. And unfortunately, a lot of the time we ourselves wish to think we are alone, because then we can be the one in control, calling the shots and serving ourselves instead of God and neighbor.

But Jesus is true to His promise, *"I am with you always, to the end of the age."* One of the ways Jesus adverts on us daily is through His Word.

Now, when I say "the Word of God" you may experience a twinge of guilt because you know you don't spend as much time in Bible study and devotional time as you ought. This is true of most modern Christians. Although the Reformation freed the Bible so that it is accessible to the masses, today in North America the majority of folks who call themselves "Christian" know very little of what's inside. This is a shame and I exhort all of us to more serious study and contemplation of God's Word.

However, I'm speaking of the Word more as St. John does at the opening of his Gospel account. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is present in and with you. He isn't just some words in the pages of a holy book. He is the Son of God, dead and risen, shining light into our darkness and bringing life.

We tend to forget a simple and obvious truth made plain in Holy Scripture: God's Word does things!

Genesis one, *“and God said...and there was”*! God's Word spoke our very creation into existence! God spoke truth about Israel's judgment through His Old Testament prophets and His Word always came to pass! He spoke the promise of Messiah to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to David and all of Israel and it all happened as promised in the person of Jesus Christ!

And the Word of God from Christ most certainly does things! Jesus rebukes a tempest and immediately the storm ceases. He tells a demon, or a fever, *“Get out,”* and it leaves. He says to the dead, *“rise”*, and they live again. God's Word does stuff.

You want to know how powerful the Word of God is? Think about how all-powerful, all-knowing God is, that nothing in heaven or earth or whatever else there is has any authority greater than His. What is the one thing that can bind this God? His own Word. God is faithful to this Word. God does not change. Once He has put a promise into Word, it is as good as done!

So when this Word of Christ makes its advent on you in your fallen life and horrible sins, it does stuff...today!

Are you worried that a particular sin is so awful, God won't forgive it? Word: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Are you concerned that maybe God is angry at you because some sin is so bloody persistent? Word: *"As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."* Are you baptized into Christ? Do you believe in Christ? Word: *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."*

God is faithful to this, His Word. This is more than just guaranteed, by the power of Almighty God in Christ Jesus, this Word is fact—accomplished by cross and grave Gospel fact!

God's Word is not all Gospel. It's perfect Law also. But that's God's good-for-you Word also, working on you today! Your conscience tells you how many times a day that you shouldn't be saying, thinking or doing something? St. Paul writes, *"They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness."* Bears witness to what? God's Word of Law! This Word adverts on you constantly in your sin, reminding you that you are a sinner, calling you to repent, and run to His Word of Gospel forgiveness! It's God's Word doing stuff to you in the here and now!

And Jesus Christ in His great mercy has given this Word of forgiveness very, very clearly to His church to use by His authority. After His resurrection He said to those men who were to found His church, *"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."*

Since then, the church has been formally proclaiming this binding, blessed absolution. Martin Luther puts it very simply in the Small Catechism: "Confession has two parts. First that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor

as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.”

Every Sunday, Christ in His church says words, His Words, and they do exactly the stuff He sent them to do. They forgive sins.

Remember this. Each day wake up and remember that you exist in the world that came about when God spoke His Word into the void, and where once there was nothing good there was now something, and it was good.

His Word does the same to you on a daily basis. Whenever you bring your sin to mind and repent, the Gospel promise in the Word of God has its way with you. Where there was once nothing but a poor, miserable sinner, there is now a child of God, and he or she is good!

It is tough for us to trust words. Politicians, marketing, the sinful people around us, they all speak words at opportune times, and at times their word fails. Not so with God. His Word is true, because as God He cannot do otherwise. And His Word is a constant, bringing salvation always. It brings salvation in a baby in a manger behind us in the past. It brings salvation in a glorious king in judgment in our future. It brings salvation this very day as we pray, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

Amen.