

“Thus says the Lord”

“Thus says the Lord!!!” That’s a favorite saying of the prophets – as a matter of fact – Ezekiel is commanded by God to speak this way to the people. And in the end, what THE LORD says is all that matters.

What the Lord says is THE truth – the ultimate reality – what really IS. Regardless of what you see, experience, or think. Regardless of what CNN or Fox News says ...regardless of what

- Pres. Biden or Gov. Ricketts thinks ...
- CDC or the stock market says ...
- Dad/Mom or best friend believes ...
- Plato, Mohammed, or Confucius confess ...
- Martin Luther, Matthew Harrison, or Scott Porath teach
- “Thus says THE LORD” is what matters.

“Thus ... says ... the Lord.” That is what you are to hear in the Church – for, as Martin Luther put it – the Church is “God’s mouth house.” It’s where God’s Word is proclaimed for all to hear.

You would think that all the world would be clamoring to hear what the one and only true God has to say – after all – there is a great desire for what is real, genuine, authentic. And in the Church today – you’d think there would be a “no-holds-barred” emphasis on “Thus says the Lord” --- but sadly, there are many distractions.

BUILDINGS consume the money – PROGRAMS are peddled – MISSION STATEMENTS are painstakingly crafted – and WORSHIP and the PASTOR get most of the attention. A prevailing attitude is that IF you have the right worship, and the right kind of pastor – THEN the church will be alright, and flourish, and be successful ...

Often, what is missing from all this commotion and activity is ... “Thus says the Lord!” If you want a great diagnostic of the *health* of a church, see what role the Incarnate Christ plays in the life of the congregation.

It is Christ who promises to be with us always – who is present and active in the midst of us in these days – preaching and teaching His Word – uniting His promises to the Sacraments through which He is at work – leading the liturgy and prayers – directing the Christian’s life of faith and love – taking care of you, guarding and protecting you, nourishing and sustaining you – giving you life.

Is there a laser-like focus on the truth that the Church is “for you” because Christ is “for you”? The Lord Jesus Christ gathers you into His presence to speak His Word into your ears – so that you may hear and believe, above all else – that your sins are forgiven.

But who are you? Did you notice how you (the hearer) are described in the readings for today? Ezekiel is sent to say “Thus says the Lord” to a rebellious people – to those who transgress against the Lord. Ezekiel preaches to those who are impudent and stubborn. But, “whether they hear or refuse to hear” – the Lord says – “they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

The Apostle Paul is sent to speak God’s Word to the Corinthians – and in so doing, he has much to boast about. He could boast of visions and revelations, of being caught up into paradise – of having heard things that cannot be told. You want to talk about distractions! It would be easy to focus on the gravitas of the Apostle Paul.

“But there is nothing to be gained” by such boasting, he says. And because his sinful pride is as vulnerable as yours – there was given him a thorn in the flesh to keep him from “being too elated” – from getting in the way of the Word he was given to preach. The thorn showed his weakness – and made him look elsewhere for his strength.

And then there’s the Gospel reading for today – where Jesus, the WORD OF GOD made flesh – sent by the Father to preach His Word – preaches, not merely a, “Thus says the Lord” ... but ... “Truly, truly, I say to you.”

Those who hear Him are astonished that this man has such wisdom and does such mighty works. They are astonished, and offended – after all, we know this guy! He’s the carpenter, Mary’s son, His brothers and sisters are right here. We can get the inside scoop, check out the skeletons in His closet. How dare He claim to speak authoritatively!

Maybe the most astonishing thing is when St. Mark tells us that Jesus “could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them” – all because of their unbelief. It’s not that they have control over Jesus – rather, God does not force His gifts on anyone – and so He preaches, so that faith might receive.

In and through His Church – it is always the Lord preaching to rebels. Although there is a desire by all for that which is real, genuine, authentic and true – the sinful nature desires it’s own truth, to determine what is real “for me.”

“Thus says the Lord” – and His powerful Word does what it says – breaking and hindering our sinful nature – revealing, and creating, what IS TRUE. His Word cannot be destroyed – it does not depend on man, a preacher, a building, or a program.

And so Jesus sends out His apostles with His authority and His Word to preach. “Take nothing” with you for the journey – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. I have given you my Word – and that is sufficient for you – and for those who will hear your ... “Thus says the Lord.”

If they will not receive you – know that they have rejected me. “So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out MANY demons and anointed with oil MANY who were sick and healed them.” God in the flesh Jesus could only heal a few people – but these twelve sinners healed many! Absolutely AMAZING!!!

Today the Lord has sent me to you – calling you to repent. And whether you hear or refuse to hear, you will know that the LORD has spoken to you this day. Confess the reality of your sin and the harm it has caused – and believe His promise, that by His blood, Jesus binds up and heals your wounds.

He will not force His grace upon you – but His underserved love is sufficient for you. Though you cannot see with your eyes – do not be astonished that He gives you His very own Body and Blood, to strengthen your weakness and give you life everlasting – and do not be offended as He declares what is true, “I forgive you all your sins.”

“Thus says the Lord.” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.