

“THY WORD IS A LAMP.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

May 1, 2016, 10:30AM

Text for the Sermon: Psalm 119:105-112, 9, 18

Prayer: Holy Father, may the words of my mouth and the responses of all our hearts glorify you, exalt Jesus, honor your Word and edify your people according to our need. Come, Holy Spirit, help us I pray.

Introduction.

This morning's sermon is brought to you by the letter N and by the numbers 8 and 22. N is the Hebrew letter that begins each of these eight verses. Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem, twenty two stanzas of eight verse each, each stanza beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

I wonder if Jewish parents use it to teach their children their ABCs or in their case their ABGs, aleph, beth, gimel.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible with 176 verses. A remarkable thing about this Psalm is that it is written about one thing. Almost every sing verse has one subject in mind. It is a Psalm written in praise of the Bible. It's a love song about Scripture.

How can a person praise the Bible for 176 verses? Wouldn't you run out of things to say and ways to say it? You would think that 176 verses just about the Bible would become repetitive.

Yet it's like the Psalmist is holding a diamond, looking through every possible facet of that diamond, and in every facet he finds new beauty, treasures, depths, yet another quality that Scripture possesses.

It's amazing how many different words he uses, each with a different shade of meaning, to describe this book. He uses six of them just in our text.

Your word, your righteous rules, your law (Torah), your precepts, your testimonies, and your statutes. In other stanzas he uses commands, commandments, ordinances, judgments, promise, and ways.

Verse 105 is one of the most familiar verses in Psalm 119 and one of the most familiar in all the Bible. We were reminded just a bit ago of the great value of songs that put Scripture to music and put it into our hearts and minds from childhood on.

God's Word guides us in the right way.

This works in two ways.

The Way of Salvation.

The very first thing Scripture does is guide us in the way of salvation. Without that, the rest of the guidance is just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. What does it profit a man to gain wisdom for living only in this world and lose his soul?

Scripture gives light to the first and great question, “What must I do to be saved?”

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

The way of life.

Having answered the first and great question, “What must I do to be saved?” Scripture then answers the second great question, “How then shall we live?” How can we live a real Christian life in a real world full of real challenges?

Remember how God treated the children of Israel in the wilderness, guiding them by His pillar of fire. God has not left us children without His holy fire, His lamp, His light. His Word is an eternal flame.

For a lamp or a light to be effective we have to turn it on and use it for the purpose for which it was intended. A lamp that’s not turned on and used is no help. If we don’t turn it on it can’t help us. If we don’t open Scripture and read it, ***it’s as useful as that lamp.***

From verse 105 we see two ways Scripture is useful.

It’s a help Day and Night.

It is meant to help us day and night. It is a light by day when things are good and clear, telling us how to live when things are well. It is a lamp by night when things are dark, telling us how to live when things are confusing or in the midst of affliction and adversity.

It’s a help Near and Far.

By being a lamp to my feet it shows me and guides me in what I should do today. By being a light to my path it shows me and guides me in what I should do tomorrow and beyond. God orders our steps, and He holds our future.

When we don't know what to do or where to turn, the Bible is filled with wisdom and encouragement. When we turn to it, God by His Holy Spirit will hear and answer and help.

The light of Scripture guides us at every age and stage of life, at school, with friends, at home, dealing with parents and children, through marriage, in the work place and into our senior years.

Light is called the old man's friend. As our eyes dim, good light helps us see and read that print that seems to get finer and finer.

The light of the Word is the old person's friend, lighting the way home, the path to heaven. The Scriptures teach us the best way of living and the most peaceful way of dying.

God's Word keeps us from the wrong way.

Again, this works in two ways.

Away from the wrong way of salvation.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

Scripture guides us away from the path of works and merit and self-righteousness, the way of earning our way into heaven or thinking we are good enough, not as bad as other people.

That was the thinking that tripped me up in high school, thinking I was basically a pretty good person, I didn't do any of those bad sins. For the life of me I couldn't believe that God wouldn't let a guy like me into heaven.

But I didn't know my own heart and how sinful it was, like pride. And I didn't know God and how holy and righteous He is. And I didn't understand that salvation was by grace through faith in Jesus. Scripture revealed these truths to me, my blind eyes were opened.

Away from the wrong paths in life.

Again and again Scripture warns us life is full of trouble, snares, traps, temptations, pits to fall into, and of practices that lead to death and not to life.

Psalm 119:110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.

We are all sinners, we are all broken vessels. We all have our inner sins, our besetting sins, those sins in our thoughts and attitudes and desires that we are constantly fighting against.

Psalm 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

This is an honest question of a young person who is encountering the pressures and temptations of everyday living.

John Bunyan said it well: “This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book.”

D. L. Moody said, “The only way to keep a broken vessel full is by keeping the faucet turned on.” We need to keep ourselves under the faucet of God’s Word.

Do you know the power of sin over your heart? Do you know the power of the enemy to trap you and ensnare you and get you to fall? Do you know the power of temptation and subtle sin and small sins that lead to bigger sins?

Do realize your weakness and your need for help beyond human means, beyond your own will power, beyond good intentions and wishful idealism and trying harder next time? Are you depending on yourself or on God?

A good light is a friend, it keeps us on the right path, it keeps us from stumbling over things, it keeps us out of harm’s way.

How many of us have some bad experience that we know if we had done what Scripture says we would not have gotten in that trouble?

Scripture guides us away from the wrong way by reproof, correction, rebuke and conviction.

Are you in some sin you know is sin, but you are not repenting, you are not turning away from it, you are not fleeing, but instead harboring or even embracing it?

Are you neglecting some duty, some responsibility, something you know you should be doing? May we say with the same Psalmist earlier in Psalm 119:

Psalm 119:11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

God’s Word guards us in when the way is dark.

Most of us have had some experience in our life of being afraid in the dark. Most of those were probably when we were young, though there may have been some scary dark moments as adults.

But darkness isn’t just the physical absence of light. Darkness can be a fear of an unknown future. But when we turn to Scripture we hear:

Isaiah 50:10 Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground.

These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.

John 8:12 “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

God’s Word is His gift to us in every dark place and dark season of life.

God’s Word is the joy of our heart.

When it comes to delighting in God’s Word I like the description one pastor gave of three kinds of Christians (Steven Cole).

There are “castor oil” Christians. They say “the Bible is bitter, but good for what ails you” and “a chapter a day keeps the devil away.” They force it down because they know it’s supposed to be good for you. No wonder many Christians are spiritually malnourished.

Then there are the “shredded wheat” Christians who say the Bible is dry, but nourishing, so they keep eating. Finally, there are those like the psalmist who are “peaches and cream” believers, they delight in God’s Word and can’t get enough of it.

Psalm 119:111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

Heritage mean inheritance, this is my inheritance, my future and my hope. This is better than a big windfall or a big estate or portfolio. This is my best treasure.

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Have you noticed that each time you read through the whole Bible you read things you never remember reading before or you get new insights you never had before?

That’s God continually opening your eyes to new and wonderful things in His Word. It is a deep well that never runs dry.

But we cannot see new things with natural or human eyes, with the eyes of the flesh. The eyes of the natural man don’t know there are wonderful things to behold in God’s Word. They read this like any other book and when they are done they put it aside and move on.

It’s the blind man who sees best his need to see. Remember blind Bartimaeus on the Jericho Road yelling out to Jesus to heal him. He wanted more, he wanted to see what he knew there was to see.

People who aren’t blind take seeing for granted. They see and don’t appreciate. Spiritual blindness is a gift **if** you realize you have it and realize that only God can make you see. We need to have our blind spiritual eyes opened by the Spirit so we can see spiritual things.

I Corinthians 2:9 as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

The psalmist expresses his delight in the Word of God by comparing it to things that he believes it is better than.

Psalm 119:72 The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 119:127 Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.

Psalm 119:162 I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.

Implications and Applications.

Psalm 119:105 has been the theme verse for all GEMS girls in the world. They have been challenged this last year to Choose Truth. They have focused not just on knowing the truth but on applying the truth.

God is infinitely good and He knows all that we need and He has perfectly provided what we need in His Word. Scripture is an expression of His great love for us.

Do you love God’s Word? Then don’t just be hearers, but doers of His Word. Don’t just believe it but practice it. This is how we best show our love for God and His truth.

If your heart is cold toward God’s Word, take this Psalm and slowly read and meditate on each pearl in this long string of 176 pearls.

If you have lost your love for God’s wisdom and truth, repent and ask Him to stir your heart and open your eyes to see the wonderful things in it. Cultivate a hunger and thirst for God’s Word. It’s your life, your health, your joy. Embrace it, love it, let it be your passion and zeal.

Prayer:

Holy Father, every action, every word, every thought is a step on the path toward heaven or hell. Oh how we all need the lamp of your Word to light our way. Turn us from the board path that leads to destruction and guide us on the narrow way that leads to life. Enable us all to make haste to avail ourselves of your provision of your Word as we make our way in this world.

Open our eyes to the wonderful things in your Word, powerful truths, riches more valuable than gold and silver, things sweeter than honey and chocolate. Help us to love your Word more and find treasures here that are cause for joy, now and for eternity.