***Word of God:***

***A Two-edged Sword***

**Hebrews 4:9-13**

Sexagesima

02.20.2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I don’t know about you, but it started with me as a little boy - I have always had a fascination with swords. I wanted to be a swashbuckler on the open seas fighting pirates (sometimes wanting to be a pirate), or a knight on a quest, or to be an adventurer the likes of Conan. I dreamed that with sword in hand I could conquer evil, and right would triumph.

I have had the privilege to hold real swords and swing them around a bit. I even did a bit of fencing for a day, but to my mind the thin rapier was not much of a sword. It certainly is not the type of sword spoken of in our text.

The Word of God is described as a two-edged sword. Imagine a fairly broad, straight blade, sharpened to a razor’s edge on both sides. This is no child’s toy, it is a dangerous weapon. It is a weapon that can pierce to the heart, slice through joints, and even sever bones to the marrow. When described that way, God’s Word does not sound like something to be played around with, and indeed it is not.

Why is that? T*he 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.*

There are two edges on a sword. First of all, God’s Word functions as the Law. There is no escape from it. It convicts us of our sin, it calls us what we are, sinners. When rightly applied, God’s Law reaches into our conscience and cuts to the very heart of the matter, revealing that which we so desperately try to obscure from our neighbors and friends, the sinful secrets that are hidden from even those closest to us.

It can be painful when the Word of God does this. When God’s ministers preach God’s Law in truth and purity, there are times we would rather not listen. In fact, when the sharp edge of the Law gets to close, we sometimes accuse the pastor of getting too personal, or that he has a hobby horse he’s riding, picking on pet sins. Sometime we just get angry and tune out the rest of what he has to say.

God’s Law is sharp, and cuts to the heart, on purpose. Faithful pastors, faithful parents, and friends who care about us, will use God’s Law as a sword to cut to the heart of our sin, in the same manner that a surgeon uses a scalpel to cut out a cancer. We want to remove cancer – in the hopes of saving a life. While a surgeon uses a scalpel to save mortal lives, God’s Word is used to save a life for eternity.

What would happen if we applied the sword of God’s Word and discerned the thoughts and intentions of your heart toward Him? Are they pure and holy? Do you fear, love, and trust in Him above ALL things? Do you believe that God only answers your prayer if the thing you desire came to pass? Did He not answer your prayer if it did not go they way you were asking? Do you love and trust Him above all things? Really?

I have said before that I could look at two things in each person’s life and discern whether they truly love and trust in God above all else. I could discern it simply by looking at the daily calendar plans of a person’s life and at their financial budget and records.

Do you love and trust God? When looking at your daily schedule, where does time in Word and prayer fit in; is it scheduled in advance for a specific time each day, or is it shoe-horned in only if there’s enough time? Is every Sunday (or Wednesday) scheduled to be in His house in order to be fed and nourished by His Word and Sacrament? Or does it happen only when – ***OR IF*** – it fits in? Regular family time in Scripture, meditation upon it, and prayer with the whole family is scheduled for each day? Or it is a sometime thing – if that?

Finances is another area where love ***and especially trust***of God could be easily discerned. Is giving to God through church or other things a budgeted item that comes first on the list? Is it a first-fruit percentage that changes as does your salary? Or does giving to the Lord happen only when you plan on being in church – or decided upon once you get there? Or is it at the bottom of the budget, whatever is leftover and available?

Yeah, I know. Some of you may be thinking of tuning me out right about now. That Law edge of the sword is awful sharp and it hurts. But, would you rather hear that Word here and now, or later, when it is too late? Yeah, you know what that means. Remember, *no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

We may as well not stop there. A good surgeon would cut out all the cancer he finds once he is in there. So, let’s apply the sword of God’s Word and discern the thoughts and intentions of your heart toward your neighbor?

When you’re in the car, do you diligently watch for the police officers, so you can put away the phone, buckle up, or slow down – as the case may be? Do you harbor anger in your heart, which Christ Himself calls murder, or are you reconciled and at peace with all people? Do you lust after the spouse of another, or after one who is simply not your spouse? Do wonder how you might obtain certain belongings of your friend, for you have admired it for awhile – and besides, they don’t use it anymore? Do you delight in exploring a particular neighbor’s faults when talking with your friends, running their reputation into the mud, or do you speak well of them, and put the best construction on everything?

You know God’s Laws! You know what you should be doing and you know what you should not be doing. Are you doing the things you should be doing? Are you avoiding the things you should not be doing?

Dear friend, as I call you to repent, I am in the same boat. That one edge of the sword is sharp, the Law edge. I’ve felt its bite, and it isn’t pleasant. But cancer needs to be cut out and removed, so does sin. Surgery hurts, but it brings healing and health.

Lest we forget and go too far, it is time to remember that the Word of God is like a two-edged sword. We know the edge that is the Law of God, but the other side is the Gospel. While the Law exposes the cancer of sin, the Gospel edge of that sword is also sharp. The Gospel cuts, dices, slices and purees sin and the attendant guilt. It puts to sinfulness to death.

The Word of God is living. It is Christ. Christ Himself is the very living Word of God. As Revelation proclaims, from His mouth comes that two-edged sword, both Law and Gospel, it proclaims repentance for the forgiveness of sin.

Christ submitted Himself to that very Word of the Law. He humbled Himself and was obedient to it, fulfilling it perfectly. There was no need for the sword to cut and divide the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow of this God-man, for there was no sin in Him. Every thought and intention off His heart was pure and holy.

But, do you remember the Ginsu knife commercials? They always said, “but wait, there’s still more, with your order, you will also get free…” I was always skeptical, is it really free? Or is it that the stuff is so cheap that *everything* they give you is barely worth what you pay for the first item?

Well, this sword, the Word of God, does come free. Christ is the Word, the two-edged sword, not only the Law, but also the Gospel. This Jesus Christ destroyed sin and death with His own body upon the cross. Consider that the cross even looks like a sword stuck point first into the ground. Christ took all sin and all death into His own flesh, and there put it to the sword – that is, He put it to death.

Did you hear how our Epistle lesson began? *So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.*

The Word of God has cut us out from the rest of humanity and brought us into His rest. We are brought into God’s rest through the waters of baptism – sin and death are destroyed, forgiveness and life are given to us. The Word in the water, puts to death and raises to new life, and there you find rest for your souls.

It is in Christ that we rest from our works. The terror of the Law is replaced by the joy of the Gospel. By faith we understand that the Sword of the Word is that which protects us from sin and death – it is a Word which speaks forgiveness to us, granting healing, strength, and peace – and therein we live in God’s rest.

Beloved of God, you can fear the Word of God, for it is a terrifying sword of wrath against sin. Or, you can rejoice and rest in it, for it has destroyed your sin and your death, giving you salvation, and defending unto life everlasting.

By the Sword, the Word of God, enter God’s rest and be at peace – now and forevermore. In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.