

Sermon ✝ July 10, 2022
Hebrews 4:12-16 / Luke 10:25-37
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Imagine. The day starts out with you being a little behind. The alarm goes off and you sleep just a little longer. Then, you can't find the slacks you want so, even though it doesn't take all that much time to decide on a different pair, you feel like the time has gotten away from you. But once in the car you feel like you can catch up.

Then it happens a tire blows. And as you struggle with the jack only to find that there's no spare tire, two people pass by in a pickup truck and yell something at you. Although you can't quite make out what they said, you think you hear something like, "*Ha, ha. Too bad*".

The frustrations of the morning catch up with you in full force so that, even after a tow truck has taken you to the garage and fixed the tire, when you finally reach the office, you snap at your boss who expressed concern that you're late. And you just can't get those two heels in the pickup truck out of your mind.

The only problem is that those two people in the pickup had yelled, "*We'll call a tow truck!*" Not what you had thought at all.

So . . . what is the reality that shapes your life? The Christian faith wants to say that ultimate reality is when we know Jesus. The truth is, however, that we cannot know Jesus unless we meet the Jesus in the Bible.

Hebrews 4:12-13 reads: "*God's word is alive and powerful! It is sharper than any double-edged sword. His word can cut through our spirits and souls and through our joints and marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts. Nothing is hidden from God! He sees through everything, and we will have to tell him the truth.*"

Ultimate reality, according to the Bible, will be defined by that one before whom we shall give account of our lives — the living Word, Jesus Christ.

Imagine it this way: what if, after that frustrating day you meet those two people from the pickup? They recognize you and ask how it went and if the tow truck got there. As you hear their concern, it dawns upon you that something is out of sync. And as you ask them what they mean or why they care, it all comes out—and reality, actual truth, emerges.

It is by reading scripture that we come to know the truth about God. This morning we continue our month-long sermon series as we consider another important faith practice: reading scripture.

In the Bible, we meet Jesus as the presence of God before whom all reality is clarified. Our mis-perceptions, failed intentions and even our self-deceptions (let alone our sins) are exposed before the transcendence of God. For as God is *Truth* (with a capital "T"), so our

truths are separated out before the light of eternal truth. Just like the “truth” of what we heard from those two in that passing pickup would be separated from reality by a conversation with those two themselves.

But it is not just Jesus in the Bible that we must meet but also the Bible in Jesus, for in Jesus the truth of God has *come* to earth. Jesus is God's promises in the flesh—the promises of understanding and forgiveness. Jesus is God's activity in our midst, the activity of calling us to face ourselves and know the truth which can set us free.

And reading the Bible is the only way to *know Jesus* with certainty. God's word in and through him invites us to test and filter all the competing “realities” of our lives against that final truth which is God.

The ultimate faith practice goal would be to daily read a portion of scripture. Maybe that's too much. Okay. Try to read from the Bible weekly or maybe every other day. Whatever works for you . . . but it's important to start.

There are gifts of daily Bible reading. Daily Bible reading, especially when we use Jesus Christ as our lens for understanding it, confirms who God is. God is the God of creation. God is the God who forgives and understands us. More than that, God has *sympathy for* our human predicament.

Daily Bible reading reminds us of what God does.

Bible reading renews our confidence. Again from Hebrews: “*So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved grace, and we will find help.*”

When we read the Bible regularly, we can boldly go to our God and look for comfort in times of need because Jesus (as God with us) never refused to help those in need. We can boldly look to our God for strength in times of weakness because Jesus was just such strength.

The story of the Good Samaritan in today's gospel reminds us of how God wants us to live and how we are to treat all people.

With confidence we ought to look to God for forgiveness in times of sin.

The only ones with whom Jesus became angry were those who thought they had no need of forgiveness; to those who asked, he always forgave in God's name and authority.

Because of our confidence in who God is and what God does, we can confidently receive grace in times of self-condemnation. Isn't it true that in the darkest hours of our lives, it is our own voice which defeats us most often? Isn't it likewise true that when evil besets us, when sorrow or need overtake us, it is our own voice which wonders what we have done to deserve it? It is in those moments that scripture promises: “. . . *we will be treated with undeserved grace, and we will find help.*”

Daily Bible reading is not a demand from God, but an invitation to grow our faith.

The invitation is for us to draw closer to God and reading scripture where we start. There are endless ways to do this.

- † purchase a daily devotional which has meditations based on God's Word.
- † Or pick up a copy of *Christ in Our Home* (available here at church).
- † Another way to get started is to reading the *One Year Bible*. This will literally walk you through the entire Bible in one year. It's available on line.
- † And make sure that your translation of the Bible is readable.

The more we read scripture, the more intimately will we know God.

The whole point of this is to know the truth.

To know God is to know life forever.

That is the promise of God.

That is the promise which the Bible wants to give you again and again as a gift of faith.
Amen.