

THE WORDS  
IN OUR LIVES



"Every once in a while,  
you let a word or phrase  
out and you want to catch it and  
bring it back. You can't do that.  
It's gone, gone for good."  
**WORDS are  
powerful  
tools**

## The Power of Words and The Word

- Pastor Ed Skutshiek

Words and language are essential to life as we know it and beyond. Most all of us are born with the ability to learn to speak, read and write a language. A person's brain, eyes, ears, throat, vocal cords, mouth and tongue work together naturally and seamlessly to permit him/her to learn one or more language and speak the same. A

newborn baby first babbles the rudimentary sounds necessary to speak any and every language on the face of this earth. It is in listening to its parents and others speak a language that allows a baby to discard unnecessary babbling sounds and begin babbling the sounds necessary for it to speak its parent's language. A person's brain, arms and fingers work together naturally and seamlessly to permit him/her to use implements for setting words on paper and other media so that thoughts, ideas, commands and knowledge are preserved and transmitted. We are literally wired to learn, speak and write a language.

We learn that some words are labels. We learn that virtually every other thing in our environment is identified by a word or label. Like every other thing in the world, each one of us is given a name. Naming a child has always said and will always say that the child belongs to a family and receives its identity from that family. We learn that some words describe actions and movement. Words like stop, go, wait, dig, and hammer go with actions or cessation of action. When these words are spoken to us, they command our action or inaction. The same words permit us to command action or inaction in others.

We learn that some words describe feelings and emotions we have in common. We learn that the word "love" can describe the romantic feelings and emotions a man experiences toward a woman and vice versa. When the words "I love you" are exchanged by a young man and woman, they declare the existence of an emotional and romantic bond between them. A partnership can be created by the exchange of these words which may last and grow for a lifetime.

The conclusion is inescapable: words and language are powerful. They are at the center of our very being. They are the building blocks of our thoughts and reason. They permit communication. Words instruct us and give us skills. They mould us. Some words build us up and other words tear us down. Words make us who we are. The reformer Martin Luther came to see the importance of words and language in the relationship between God and people. Luther declared that God's Word created us and built us up, explained our downfall and works our salvation.

The words of Genesis 1:1-2:4 declare the universe as we know it came to be because divine words were spoken by God into the dark void and they produced something tangible. These words were not God. God spoke divine words and things happened. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He spoke again and the rest of creation, including people, came to be. When God created human beings, He created us in His Image. Part of being created in God's image is the ability to speak and communicate with language. Language and speech are thus a gift from God and make us like God in that regard.

God gave human beings a command: be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth. God said to us: "Be who I created and empowered you to be. Love, work, think, aspire, build and multiply." Words and language have unleashed this creative process in human beings. Language has permitted our species to form societies, build cities, empires, trains, cars, airplanes and spacecraft.

Luther reminded us that God also commanded humanity to have faith in His Word. Faith in God's Word consisted of obedience to a command not to eat the fruit of a tree (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). God's Word declared that breaking this command would result in the loss of innocence, loss of

a relationship with God, and death. (Genesis 2:4-25). The Bible testifies that we ate the fruit and were changed. The fruit did not change us; rather, it was the Word of God that changed us (Genesis 3:1-24). The same Word that created the universe worked a change in human beings: we lost our innocence, and we were endowed with the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Death came into the world. While we could identify evil, we were not endowed with the ability to avoid doing evil. It seems to come naturally. We do not have to teach our children to be selfish. They are naturally selfish. We have to teach children to overcome their selfishness and share with and respect the property of others. It seems no matter how much time we spend teaching our children acceptable behaviour, their drift toward selfish and uncaring behaviour is relentless. Who can save us from this lot? God!

God saved us with His Word that was written out. God used the prophet Moses to reveal our creation and fall, and God's perfect Law for humanity. He also revealed God's promise of a nation, and then a man, who would be a blessing to the world. (Genesis 12:1-4). God used a series of other prophets who declared that even God's chosen people could not follow God's laws, and that God would send His Son into the world as a human being to reveal God to us, to destroy death by dying, and thereafter to establish an eternal kingdom. God spoke through the authors of the New Testament and declared that the promises made by Him in the Old Testament were fulfilled in the immaculate conception in the Virgin Mary, birth, life, ministry, miracles, teaching, suffering, death and resurrection of His one and only Son, Jesus (God's Word made flesh).

Jesus said: "***I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.***" (John 5:24) Luther believed these words, and he taught and confessed that hearing, reading and meditating on God's Word was absolutely necessary for faith and salvation. Luther was the first to say that the Bible itself is not divine; rather, it is the medium through which God is revealed and acts. The divine words that created the universe would create something from nothing in the hearer. In his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Luther declared that it was impossible to have faith in Jesus or come to Him unless the Gospel was preached to the hearer. Luther believed that God the Holy Spirit literally comes to us when the words of the Holy Gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation with God through Christ's death and resurrection are preached to us. With these words, the Holy Spirit changes our hearts, minds, spirits and souls. This is why Luther could say the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, through which God still speaks, and as the ***only*** (or in the Latin "sola") ***source of salvation***, the Church's ***doctrine*** and ***standard*** for the faith and life of the Church.

During Luther's time, the Bible was printed in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and as such, was inaccessible to anyone other than the educated elite. Luther's belief that God's Word changes people demanded that the Scriptures be made available to all people in their native language. So he published a German New Testament in 1522 and the entire Bible in German in 1534. Others followed his example through the centuries and translated the Bible into every language imaginable. As a result, the Gospel has been spoken into the dark void of billions of people and awakened faith. In obedience to the Gospel, water has been applied to them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this baptism, the baptized person is joined to the death and the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:1-14). It is not the water that does this, but God's Word. Lutherans believe that, in same way that disobedience of God's Word produced estrangement from God, loss of innocence and death, God's Word used in obedience in baptism really unites us with Christ's death and resurrection. We really die with Jesus; we really die to our sin and are really made alive in Christ. God's Word does this. We are a new creation. God's Word creates faith and belief in these wonderful truths worked out by God within us.

Do you want to cross over from death to life? Do you want to be a new creation and have faith? Come be moulded and shaped by God's Word at a church near you.