

**Sermon for Pentecost 8**  
**July 30, 2017**

**“God’s Word Works”**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from the Word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Amen.

God said, “<sup>10</sup>Just as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return there unless they water the earth, make it give birth, and cause it to sprout, and it gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so it will be with my Word that goes forth from my mouth. It will not return to me empty. Rather, it will accomplish whatever I please, and it will succeed in the purpose for which I sent it.” With those poetic, powerful words, God gives us a clear principle: God’s Word works.

That’s an important principle for us to review today. It doesn’t always feel like God’s Word works or accomplishes any purpose at all. But God promised it: his Word works. It succeeds in the purpose for which he sends it.

The apostle Paul’s mission work in Corinth, recorded in Acts 18 our epistle reading, serves as a case study for us. It’s a real-life example of that principle in action. God’s Word works.

After doing some mission work in Athens, Paul’s next stop was Corinth. Corinth is in Greece. Greece has a lot of islands all over the Aegean Sea, and the mainland, jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea, is in two large sections, joined by an isthmus, a skinny little land bridge. Corinth is right on that isthmus, with a port on either side, controlling that bottleneck in the middle of Greece. In Paul’s day, Corinth had a very bad reputation. In a Roman empire that welcomed sexual sins of all kinds, Corinth was known for sexual corruption. You might sadly consider it like our country, which celebrates more and more sexual perversions, and yet, some cities are known extra for their sins. Corinth was that kind of town, the kind you don’t tell your mom about your visit. And that is where Paul was going to preach next.

With no congregation, yet, to support his work, Paul met up with Aquila and Priscilla who were Jewish tentmakers, which was also Paul’s trade skill, so he worked with them. Our account doesn’t say whether those two were Christians yet or not, but they come up again later and definitely are Christians and are evangelizing. That’s how Paul spent his week, earning a living. On Saturdays, he’d go to the synagogue and discuss the Bible and explain that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the promised Savior from God.

When two more missionaries, Silas and Timothy arrived from doing work in Macedonia to the north, it seems like they must have brought funding along too, because now Paul was able to go back to being full time in his ministry.

God’s Word works. So what happened? The majority of the synagogue opposed the truth that Paul was teaching, and they slandered him. Does God’s Word really work? Paul shook off his clothes as a symbol that was separating himself from them completely – not even taking their dust with him—and he went next door to hold meetings at Titius Justus’s house, a Christian convert. And one of the families that joined was the household of Crispus, who had been the synagogue ruler. And Paul kept preaching, the Christians kept studying God’s Word, and many people believed. God’s Word works, and accomplishes his purpose.

The situation must have constantly hostile and challenging though, because God came to Paul in a vision to encourage him: “Do not be afraid, but keep on speaking, and do not be silent. <sup>10</sup>For

I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, because I have many people in this city.” God’s Word works, even if there’s opposition, or stress, or rejection.

There’s a lesson here for us. “Do not be afraid, but keep on speaking, and do not be silent.” Those words are accurately applied to us in our town. God wants us to keep speaking his Word. That’s how we go and make disciples of all nations which is the mission God has given to you and every other Christian too.

But the excuse comes: “No one wants to hear it. No one wants to join our church.” The stories of rejection, intended to prove the point, are easy to come by. There’s that one family I heard about, where the husband wasn’t a member and eventually the whole family left the church and said it was because the church wasn’t friendly enough to the non-member husband – but that really serves as proof that they didn’t love hearing the Word of God. There’s people who start a Bible Information Class, but decide not to finish. There are members who find this reason or that reason why they don’t need to hear the pure and true Word of God anymore.

Jesus knows how it is. In his parable of the sower and the seed, three out of the four types of soil didn’t lead to faith and heaven. But you know what’s not part of the parable? Jesus didn’t say, “I only have a little bit of seed. Make sure you only plant in good soil.” The opposite is true. The seed is sown all over the place and falls on all kinds of soil. The fact that some reject, or that others fall away as quickly as they joined, leaves a pit in your stomach that makes you want to cry, but it is not an excuse to stop spreading the seed or stop inviting people to come and see God’s grace at our church.

But there’s another excuse: “They already know it. They already know who God is and don’t need to hear it from me.” See that’s an excuse that thinks it’s being clever, because claims that all the evangelism has already been done, so you don’t have to do any more. But the excuse is flimsy and floppy all the same. Christians, most of the time, act like Christians. It’s all too easy to see that there are many who don’t know God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit by the way they act and behave.

It’s easy to get down and discouraged when you look at the many ways people reject God’s Word or fall away from God’s Word. It can lead a person to doubt that God’s Word works.

God gave Paul some really good news though. He said, “I have many people in this city.” That was a promise to Paul that there would be converts in Corinth. We don’t know what God’s plan is for our congregations in Bennett County and Sheridan County. We don’t know if he’s got a whole lot more people who will be converted or not. We do know this though: God has people in this city. Some of them are us. And we won’t know who the rest are unless we trust God’s promise that his Word works and that he wants us to use it to share Jesus the Savior of \_\_\_\_\_ County, with all the people of \_\_\_\_\_ County.

Here’s more good news. Not only do we have God’s Word and God’s authority to use it, you know someone very well, that God’s Word worked on. It’s you.

How did you get to be a believer? God’s Word works. God used his Word on you – maybe first in baptism, and continuing with the preached Word and the Lord’s Supper – and God used his Word to open your ears to hear of your Savior, and he took a hammer to your heart of stone, smashed it to pieces, and gave you a living and loving heart. Does God’s Word really work? You know it does. God’s Word changed your life. You can look around town and see what it’s like for people who don’t have God, because they don’t have hope or peace or forgiveness or eternal life either. But you do. And the only tool by which God delivers those things is His Word.

God's Word works. Use it! Use it yourself. Use it here at church with your fellow members. Use it at home every day with your family. Use it every day alone with yourself too. God's Word works and you will be watered and your faith will grow. Use it on your family members, your neighbors, and your friends who are not active Christians. Some will reject it and you. Some will show interest, but drop it like a hot potato. Others will be fair weather Christians, and when bad weather comes, they'll falter and fall, and all of those things are sad. But some. Some will hear God's Word from you, and God will bring them to faith, and God will grow their faith and they will produce a crop of righteousness and they will go to heaven. Amen.

Text: *Acts 18:1-11*

*God's Word works his purpose in the city of Corinth, converting many people.*

After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them. <sup>3</sup>Because he had the same occupation, he stayed and worked with them, for they were tentmakers by trade. <sup>4</sup>Every Sabbath he led a discussion in the synagogue, trying to persuade both Jews and Greeks. <sup>5</sup>When Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was entirely devoted to preaching the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. <sup>6</sup>But when they opposed Paul and slandered him, he shook out his clothes and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles!" <sup>7</sup>He left that place and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshipper of God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. <sup>8</sup>Crispus, the synagogue leader, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized. <sup>9</sup>One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid, but keep on speaking, and do not be silent. <sup>10</sup>For I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, because I have many people in this city." <sup>11</sup>He stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.