

“It Works” **Isaiah 55:9-11**
9th Sunday after Pentecost **July 17, 2005** **Pastor Jon Bergemann**

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love. Amen. The Word of God for our consideration is found in Isaiah chapter 55 (read text). In the name of Jesus, whom God’s Word testifies about, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

The year? 1985. The problem for Coca Cola? The previous fifteen years had seen Coca-Cola’s market share remain flat while its arch rival Pepsi’s market share continued to climb.

The solution (or so they thought)? Discontinue making the original recipe for Coca-Cola, and create and market a new and improved version of their original product, calling it “New Coke”. (Do some of you remember this?)

The result? Disaster. The American public hated the new product. In fact, within three months the outcry became so loud that Coca-Cola brought back the original. The lesson: sometimes it’s not wise to try to improve on what time has proven works, no matter how impatient one might be for success.

The year? Around 700 B.C. The problem for the prophet Isaiah? The previous decades had seemed to see God’s market share in the spiritual scene of Israel remain flat or decline while many of His arch rivals, such as the false gods Baal and Ashtoreh, continued to climb.

The solution (or so certain Israelites thought)? Discontinue the original commands of God – commands to remain faithful to every single syllable of His Scripture and to keep separate in religious matters from those who don’t – and create and market a new and supposedly improved version of religion. One in which a little Baal or Ashtoreh worship could be thrown with the worship of the true God. One in which His Word could be adhered to as was convenient.

The result? Disaster. God hated the new product. He hated the arrogance that His people showed in trying to change His Word to fit their popular culture. In fact, He used the Assyrian army to wipe out the northern tribes of Israel.

The year? 2005. The problem for Christians in America? The previous decades have seemed to see God’s market share in the spiritual scene of America remain flat or decline, while many of His arch rivals, such as Islam, New Age Cults, Mormonism, Scientology, and even the Wiccan religion have continued to climb.

The solution (or so certain Christians have thought)? Improve upon the original product of God’s Word. Eliminate anything that might be offensive to popular American culture, and try to blend in with the world around us. For instance, some churches remove any mention of sin from their services. They don’t want to offend anyone.

The result? Spiritual disaster. So much that some Pastors in other denominations are questioning whether Jesus rising from the dead actually happened. Ouch! The new product is not improved!

So what was the solution for the problem in 700 B.C.? And the solution for the problem in 2005 A.D.? God gives it to us in our text for today. Listen to His words again (read text)

Do you see what his solution is? Stick to the original! Stick to God’s Word! Don’t change it! It works!

Did you catch the illustration? Just as rain and snow can’t help but water the ground, making it flourish and bud, so God’s Word can’t help but work! It can’t help but accomplish his results! It doesn’t need to be changed! It works!

Ah, but we know that, don’t we? We sing such beautiful hymns as “God’s Word is Our Great Heritage” or even earlier in life, “Jesus Loves Me, this I know, for THE BIBLE tells me so.” We belong to a church body which, by the grace of God, adheres to the entire Word of God and seeks to preserve and teach it in truth and purity.

And yet . . . do we ever get a little impatient with the Word of God? Do we ever wish for more? Do we ever think that God could improve a little on the original product?

Maybe we feel it as we share our faith in Jesus to a family member, only to have that person ridicule us and call us naïve. Maybe we feel it as we share our faith or live out our faith in actions at work, only to have our beliefs or lifestyle become the butt of jokes. Maybe we feel it as we drive to church on Sunday while driving past so many others who aren't headed in any such direction. And maybe we get discouraged. And impatient. And wonder if God's Word really works.

Or maybe we show our doubt in its power in more subtle ways. Maybe it happens as opportunities for personal devotion or worship slip by far too easily. Maybe it happens as we fail to dig into His Word through Bible study. And maybe we forget what God's Word really is – the words of the Almighty himself. The tool with which he chooses to talk to us. To save us.

Oh, how well we know our apathy at times for this Word. How shameful that we sometimes consider hearing and learning what God has to say to us as something that we can get to "later." How poorly we defend its truth, and hold onto it with all our life.

And yet . . . here we are today. Doing what? Listening to that Word!

What does that mean? It means that God hasn't removed the rain shower of His Word from our presence. It means that he continues to speak to our hearts through His Word.

It means that God wanted you here today so that He could tell you some very important truths from his Word. Like what? Like that fact that He has taken every one of your and my disgusting sins, every act of apathy toward his Word, every blemish in his sight, and nailed them to the cross. Jesus died for them. You are forgiven.

Yes, he wanted you here today, listening to his Word, so that he could tell you who you are: precious, loved, and beautiful in his sight.

Yes, he wanted you here today, listening to his Word, so that he could tell you what he will do for you: keep you in his care every day of this life, and deliver you to eternal life.

And the fact that you are listening to this Word? The fact that you are receiving assurance of forgiveness in this Word? The fact that this Word can comfort you today and always? It proves that this Word works! It proves that it doesn't have to be changed! It proves that we can build our lives on it and leave this life with it! Yes, God's Word works!

How else do we know? I think of a first grader at our school, who after being instructed in this Word for the first time in her life throughout the course of her time at TCA, confidently proclaimed to a video camera in so many words, "Jesus loves me! The Bible says it, I know it's true." God's Word works.

I think of a man who we will call Ed. A man who after 57 years of alcohol abuse, womanizing, jail terms, and bouts of depression . . . and a year of Bible study, looked a fellow WELS pastor in the eye and said, "I believe in Jesus! I believe!", before being called home to heaven a few months later. God's Word works.

I think of a baby being baptized, who, in a way that goes beyond our understanding, has a simple faith in Jesus created in his or her heart and made a child of God. God's Word works.

I think of a certain adult, we'll call him Ray, who after a hard life of hard living and blatant mockery of God's Word, heard the Word for many years through his believing wife. In time, that Word watered the desert of Ray's heart. Ray was baptized at the tender young age of 73, while wiping the tears of joy streaming down his eyes with his tattoo laden hands. God's Word works.

I think of the estimated 6,000 people per day coming to faith in China. God's Word works.

But more, I think of the face I see in the mirror every day – the face of a hopeless sinner by nature, but now a heaven bound saint, a forgiven, priceless child of God whose dead heart has been made alive by the miracle of the Word.

And I think of each face that I see here this morning – faces of spiritually dead souls by nature, but now spiritually alive through the Word. Faces of blood bought children of God, who know that truth through the Word. Faces that I will see and rejoice with forever in heaven, because of the faith created by the Word!

My brothers and sisters, God's Word works! It won't return to Him empty! Read it! Savor it! Grow in it! Share it with your friends and neighbors and family! Let it build you up and lift you in every moment of life!

Don't be ashamed of it! Don't try to change it! It's God's original recipe to reveal his love to you.
And it works! Amen.