

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 17, 2005  
9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Deuteronomy 18:18,19  
Pastor Leon Ehlert

First Lesson: Joel 3:12-16  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 18  
Second Lesson: Romans 8:26-27  
Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

## His Word Is Mightier Than His Acts

I want to begin this morning with a little quiz. I am going to give you the words, and I want to see if you can associate the event in your mind. Number 1: “Mr. Watson, come here. I want you.” The first intelligible words spoken by telephone—Alexander Graham Bell to his assistant, Mr. Watson, March of 1876. How about another one? “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” That’s right, the very first words spoken by the first man to step foot on the surface of the moon, Astronaut Neal Armstrong, July 1969. One last one: “I have a dream.” I would imagine that for many of you I simply don’t have to finish that phrase, that many of you either because you saw it on the news at the time or have seen it subsequently so many times you recognize instantly the speaker as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—the march on Washington, August of 1963.

I tell you that words transcend time. While you and I may forget the details of the event itself, the words that are associated with that event remain locked in our minds forever and WORDS HAVE POWER. I want you to think of the impact these words have had in people’s lives. Phrases such as: “You’re fired.” Or: “We, the members of the jury, find the defendant guilty” or “innocent” as the case may be. Or: “I now pronounce you husband and wife.” Or: “I want a divorce.” People’s earthly lives have been forever changed simply by the speaking of these words and words have an ability to reach down to the very depths of our souls. They get down to the very root of our consciousness and rouse our deepest emotions. Phrases such as: “I love you.” Or: “I am sorry.” Or: “The operation was a success.” Or the surprise announcement out of Green Bay this morning that Brett Favre was going to retire effective immediately.

I’m just kidding about that one. It does prove a point though. Words arouse emotions and if we use words for impact, it should not surprise us that God uses them for maximum impact as well. In fact, it is safe to say that God chooses to reveal himself to us chiefly through his words. Oh, he will reveal himself to us in nature. You look outside and you see the sun and the stars and the moon, and you see that orderliness of it, and we are struck by the power of God. And then sometimes God chooses to defy the very laws of nature that he himself sets up. We call them miracles. If you have ever read about a miracle or have witnessed a miracle, we are struck by the wonder of God. However, God’s most important truths, his greatest impact, his most important acts are found chiefly in his Word.

When Elijah was down and out because it didn’t seem like anybody was listening to him, God said, “Elijah, I want you to go and I want you to stand on the mountain.” Elijah

must have thought, “Oh, I am going to see the Lord.” At first a wind came and it went up one side of the mountain and down the other, but the Lord was not in that wind. Then an earthquake came and it shook the very foundation of that mountain, but the Lord was not in that earthquake. Then a fire came, and that fire burned up one side and down the other, but the Lord was not in that fire. Then Elijah heard a whisper, and he took his cloak and he wrapped himself up in it because he knew that at that moment, he was in the presence of the Lord.

I want to remind you of something this morning. I want to remind you on a very warm Sunday morning of just how significant, how effective, how long-lasting God’s words are when it comes to your life. Yes, we are talking about the power of the Lord—his Word is greater than his acts.

I want to tell you something about teaching in high school. If I were to characterize teenagers, generally, they are a people of many words. They love to talk. They have opinions about just about everything. In fact, I am fully convinced that there are times in my classroom when I could simply pose a question, give them some passages to look up, and go back to my office, and they would not know that I had left. The reason I say that is because sometimes it doesn’t appear that they notice when I am there. But you see, when you study God’s Word, no matter where it happens to be, like we are doing right now in church, or in a classroom setting, or in personal Bible study, there is always a change that takes place. There is greater trust in God. There is greater confidence in the future. There is greater certainty about Christ. All of these things have happened to you. And they have happened to you because of words. But you see, they are not just any words. They are the Word of God.

You know that some people have actually had God speak to them directly. Some of the very first words spoken to Adam were these: “*Where are you?*” (Genesis 3:9.) Adam and Eve had just sinned and God was looking for some indication, some sign, that they were repentant. Unfortunately he didn’t find any. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. More significantly however, he spoke these words: “Do not come any closer. *Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground.*” (Acts 7:33.) There is a line between us and God, and that line is called “sin”, and sin separates us from our Lord. God spoke directly to Ezekiel and he said, “*The soul who sins is the one who will die.*” (Ezekiel 18:4.) Sin separates us from God in this life. Unless it is dealt with effectively, it will separate you and I from God for an eternity.

Sometimes God’s words to his people are brutally frank, and they are harsh, and they are judgmental, and they have to be. Because you see, ever since the fall of humans into sin, our sinfulness is something we tend to minimize or excuse or dismiss. Sometimes however, God’s words are kind, and they are soothing. “*The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.*” (Exodus 34:6,7.) Sometimes God’s words to you are going to be kind and soothing and full of love.

You realize though, don’t you, that most often God does not talk directly to his people. Rather, he talks to us through others. We call these people prophets. Some of them

are familiar: Moses, Elijah. Some of them maybe not so familiar, women like Deborah, or others like Elihu or Balaam. All these different men and women speaking at different times and at different places, and all of them having a certain message. Sometimes that message was that a kingdom that appeared to be ruling the universe was going to be destroyed before the sun came up. Sometimes predicting great famines. But as the Old Testament came to a close, those words centered around a very special prophet. I read about him a minute ago. *“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.”* (Deuteronomy 18:18-19.)

Who is that prophet? Hebrews Chapter 1 tells us: *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”—*Jesus, God’s Son, was that prophet. Jesus, God’s Son, was that creator. Jesus, God’s Son, was that Savior. Scripture is very clear that everything comes to being through his Word.

Jesus did not have to move through time saying, “Let there be this and let there be that.” He could have simply willed everything into creation, but he didn’t. He spoke everything into creation. Scripture is clear that to this very day the universe around you, the very globe that you are sitting on right now, your life, is being held together by the power of God’s Word.

It is important and interesting to note that any time Jesus does a miracle he always connects that miracle with words. I am going to give you some words, you tell me the miracle. Number 1: *“Lazarus, come out!”* (John 11:43.) Pretty easy—the raising of the man who had been dead for many days. A different one: “Be quiet. Come out of him.” Recognize him? Mark Chapter 5—God saying to the demon-possessed man, to the demons in the demon-possessed man—“Hey, you have to leave now.” One last one: *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30.) Jesus’ words on the cross announcing that the plan of salvation was now complete.

So you see, it really doesn’t matter whether Jesus is announcing the plan of salvation is complete, doing some great miracle or some kind act, he always connects his word with his actions. Why? It is because Jesus wanted people back in his day and to our day to listen and believe when he speaks. He wants us to listen and believe when he simply says, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16.) He wants us to listen and believe when he says to us, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28.) He wants us to listen and believe when he simply says, *“your sins are forgiven.”* (Matthew 9:2.)

You and I, we are a people who need to found our faith on the Word of Christ. It’s kind of like that centurion who came up to Jesus and he said, “Look, Jesus, my servant is sick.” And Jesus said, “Okay, take me to him.” Now, I am a gambling man—I am going to imagine that at that moment 99% of us would say, “Okay Jesus. You better hurry up before something bad happens.” Not that man. That man said, “Hey look Jesus. You don’t have to do anything. You don’t have to go anywhere. *Just say the word, and my servant will be healed.*” (Matthew 8:8.) And something important happened because

Jesus turns from that man and he faces the crowd and he identifies the crowd and says, *"I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."* (Matthew 8:10.)

Do you ever wonder why? It is because Jesus' words were enough. Sometimes you and I forget that. Sometimes Jesus' words are not enough, and we want Jesus to do something, or to change something, or to make something happen rather than trust him when he says, *"My grace is sufficient for you."* (2 Corinthians 12:9.) Sometimes we look for some outward sign, some miracle, some emotional encounter with God rather than trusting him when he says, *"faith comes from hearing the message; and the message is heard through the Word of Christ."* (Romans 10:17.) Sometimes you and I wish that we had something more in our worship service besides just the Word and the Sacraments. We wish that we had something more to bring more people into our church family called Zion. Or more to shake up those who are no longer coming to church rather than trusting Christ when he says, *"For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword."* (Hebrews 4:12.)

When that rich man was in hell and he was being punished for his unbelief, he prayed to Abraham. He said, "Father Abraham, send somebody back to earth to warn my five brothers about this terrible place." Do you remember what Abraham said? Abraham said, "Look, they have Moses and the prophets. They have the Word. Your brothers should listen to that."

My friends, sometimes in your life—no—most times in your life, the Word of God is all that you will have, but it is all that you will need. When you are on your death bed and you are waiting to leave time and enter eternity, all you will need are the words of God who says, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."* (John 11:25.) And that will be enough because you remember, heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word will never pass away.

**Let us pray. Dear Father in heaven. We repent for all of those times that your Word has not been enough for us; for all those times that we wanted something more from you than simply your promises. We ask that you would once again reassure us that we are your dear children, that we are saints. We also ask that you would give an added measure of strength and confidence in your Word so that we may take that Word and boldly proclaim it to those who do not yet trust it with their sole salvation. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen**