

God's Word Changes Things!
I. Awakening people to the truth.
II. Comforting people with salvation.

"For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant...I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."

After months of waiting, the day finally arrives. The morning sickness, the backaches, the doctor's appointments, the time spent preparing the nursery, packing your bags so that you're ready to go when the day finally arrives. And then comes the hours of labor and delivery. But in the end, a mother will admit that it's all worth it as she hold that tiny baby in her arms for the very first time. But having a baby changes things for moms and dads alike. Gone is the freedom to come and go and do as you please because baby's schedule is now your schedule. Gone is the ability to sleep through the night because baby's sleep habits come before your sleep habits. Whether or not you've experienced these things personally, it's obvious that you were part of this experience as a child of your mother.

It's interesting how God uses the experience of a mother giving birth to a child to begin our text for today. He says, *"For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant."* Just as a mother longs for the end of her pregnancy and the delivery of her child, so too God longs for the day when he will deliver his children from this world of sorrow to the joys of heaven. Just as a mother longs for the day when she can hold her child in her arms, so too God longs for the day when he will be able to hold his children in his arms. The day is coming soon when the arms that created the heavens and the earth, the arms that were stretched out for us on the cross, the arms that reached out and made us his dear children, will be the same arms welcoming us into our heavenly home. **God's Word Changes Things! I. Awakening people to the truth. II. Comforting people with salvation.**

Everything about a baby is so tiny and cute. Tiny fingers, tiny toes, tiny ears, a tiny nose. A tiny stomach with a not so tiny appetite and a not so tiny cry when that appetite needs to be satiated. Whether it's two thirty in the afternoon or two thirty in the morning, when baby's hungry, everybody receives the wakeup call. And parents need to hear and respond to that wakeup call for the good of their child. In our text, our Heavenly Father sounds a wakeup call for his children to hear when he says, *"Hear, you deaf; look, you blind and see...I will lay waste the mountains and the hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools...those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'you are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame...you have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing."*

Deaf and blind. Spiritually speaking, that's how God describes the Children of Israel at the time of the prophet Isaiah. In another chapter he tells us, *"These people come near to me with their mouths and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."* I suppose there's more than one reason we can call them the Children of Israel. Grumbling and complaining about this, that, and the other thing. Wanting things their way or no way. Angry with their leaders and with each other. Doing what they wanted when they wanted without thinking about how it might affect others. Turning a blind eye to those who needed

help and a deaf ear to God and His Word. When things were going well it was their own doing and when things weren't going so well it had to be God's doing.

Thankfully God would never see similarities like these in our lives, would he? Saying and doing what we want... without taking the feelings of others into consideration. Check. Turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to those who could use help with the hopes someone else will do it instead. Check. A lack of patience when people, places, and things don't seem to be moving as quickly as we want them to or in the way we want them to that finds us firing off angry words or emails to let them know about it. Check. Grumbling and complaining, arguing and bickering, gossiping and slandering. Check, check, check, check, check. Yes, God's children today can be just as childish as the Children of Israel.

Fellow children of God, don't let anything get in the way of "*loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself.*" Because those who fail to do so run the risk of being turned back in utter shame as God tells us in our text. They run the risk of finding themselves pounding on heaven's door only to hear Jesus say to them, "*I never knew you.*" Thankfully, as Peter tells us, "*God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"

Cries and tears of repentance flood the ears of our Heavenly Father. And nothing perks the ears of a parent more than the sound of a child crying, especially the cries of their own children. Some church members might find it odd that Pastor Horn doesn't hear the cries of their children during church, but cannot tune out the cries of his own children during church. A parent hears the cries of their children and tends to them because that's what loving parents do. That's the way it is with our Heavenly Father. He hears the cries of his children that come to him in their prayers from the pillows on which they sleep at night. He wants nothing more than to run to them and comfort them to make the hurt go away, which is why he tells us in our text, "*It pleased the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious...I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.*" God made his righteousness known first and foremost in the birth of His Son for, "*when the time had fully come, God sent his Son born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law that we might receive the full rights of sons.*" God will make his righteousness known when Jesus comes again in glory to judge both the living and the dead. And throughout history, God has continued to make his righteousness known in the pages of His Word.

New parents who find themselves awake night after night with a newborn comfort themselves with the truth that "this too shall pass." Their child will eventually sleep through the night enabling them to do the same. Even more comforting for the children of God is the truth that the trials and tribulations of this world will soon pass: when we won't have to deal with the devastation that sin and evil brings into our lives; when we will rest from our earthly labors in our heavenly home.

In our lesson for today, the thought of the blind being able to see might not impact us as much unless we've been in that situation. Try "going blind" for a while. Blindfold yourself at home and just try walking to the bathroom from the kitchen. After that experience you might not take your sight for granted. Spiritually speaking, Scripture tells us that we are blind, dead, enemies of God by nature. But the Holy Spirit, working through the Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, has opened our eyes to see. And what does the Holy Spirit lead us to see? He leads us to see God's love for us in Jesus. He leads us to see the eyes of our Savior that wept tears over people who rejected him. He leads us to see the drops of sweat that fell from our Savior's brow in the Garden of Gethsemane. He leads us to see the blood that flowed from his pierced side as he suffered and died on the cross for our sins. And he leads us to see the tears of joy that fell from the eyes of Mary and others when they saw that Jesus had risen just

like he said. Working through Word and Sacrament the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see these things and keeps them open until at last we see Jesus face to face in heaven.

In today's world, many people don't see it this way. They think that if they try really hard they can make it to heaven on their own, but God's Word tells us that's not how it works! Just as it would be foolish for a parent to believe that if a baby tries really hard he can make his way down the stairs to the kitchen to mix up a bottle and feed himself, it's equally as foolish to think that people can find their way into the kitchen of God's grace and mix up a bottle of heaven for themselves. A loving parent has to do it all for their child and that's exactly what our loving God has done for us. Notice the language God uses in our text to bring this out. He says, *"I will lead them....I will guide them...I will turn darkness into light. These are the things I will do. I will not forsake them."* On our own we couldn't have done it, but thankfully we don't have to because when it comes to our salvation God has done it all! God's Word changes things. Think of how God's Word has changed you! From a child of the devil to a child of God. From deserving punishment in hell to looking forward to blessings in heaven.

Don't ever take this spiritual insight for granted and don't ever underestimate the power of God's Word and the changes it can bring about in the lives of others! Think about how God's Word has changed you and how it will continue to change you as you make it the top priority in your life; in your living, in your giving, in the way you deal with others. We know that Faith Lutheran isn't made up of lifelong WELS Lutherans. We realize how many people came from different church backgrounds, some who had no church background at all. But that's all changed and ultimately, God's Word brought about that change, a change that finds people growing here in God's Word in its truth and purity. God has led them. God has guided them. God has united them as one in mission and purpose. God has not forsaken them and God never will until at last he delivers all of his children from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven. A change that will also come about by the power of His Word spoken by a loving Savior who has nothing but the best interests of all of his children in mind. Oh, that changes things, you say. It certainly does! May it continue to do so! Amen.