

Lives Transfigured by the Word
based on Psalm 50, David Jahnke, 2/11/18

Psalm 50:1 The mighty one, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

The Lord does speak; His Word summons us and everyone from the moment we wake to the moment we fall asleep every day. A lot of people wonder why the Lord doesn't speak like He used to? But the better question is why are we not listening to His constant summons to good and meaningful work; to enjoy delicious food and rejoice in a beautiful world; His summons to patience and peace and love and repentance and forgiveness.

The apostle Paul said God's Word is always on our lips and in our hearts. That Word had been hidden, but Psalm 50 verse 2 tells us that a new day has come for: 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday when Jesus called disciples to join him in a hike up a mountain. When they got to the top, God's glorious light radiated through Jesus. The disciples had seen Jesus do some amazing things as I talked about with the children. But this was altogether something new; the fulfillment of the Psalmist's prophecy. And then a Word thundered down from a cloud, "This is my Son. Listen to him."

We live in a world which is not particularly willing to climb Mt. Zion with Jesus and explore the idea that God's voice is thundering within and around us all of the time. And that fallen world is having a huge impact on the church in America and more importantly on our youth who are falling prey to all kinds of evil powers.

I read about one example of this earlier this week: 1. The prevalence of drug use and our new governor's plan, along with Senator Booker, to legalize pot for recreational use in our state. I believe all of the partying of baby boomers in the 60s and seventies through my generation in the eighties, and even into parenthood was not enough of a bad example for our children, do we really want to give them the message that there is nothing wrong with smoking pot according to the laws of the state?

And anyone who believes pot is no different than or even better than drinking needs to wake up. It may be better than getting drunk but that's a rather low standard. You can have a beer or glass of wine and not have a large impact on your brain, body or soul. The same is not true for smoking marijuana which is way more powerful today than in previous generations. It de-motivates and de-energizes and has other harmful psychological and physiological effects.

Now we should de-criminalize it since white people smoke just as much as black and latino people and yet minorities are arrested for it 4-5x more often and are more likely to get a more serious sentence. Some of my black facebook friends were sharking their heads this week about a white guy getting rehab and probations for two kilos of heroin. So much for equal justice under the Law!

But legalizing marijuana will only open wider the floodgates of hedonism opened from the 60s on; floodgates which have resulted in the opioid epidemic we see in our nation today. And God will not have it! We see this as we continue... in Psalm 50:3 Our God comes and does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him. 50:4 He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: 50:5 "Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"

God so wants to gather in and protect his people who are bringing destruction upon themselves and others. Suicides, overdoses, chronic anger, emptiness, violence, wasted resources and lives. I just read this morning about a study done in Chatham, one of our state's best school districts. 152 high school and middle school students seriously considered suicide with substance abuse being a huge part of the problem.

God remembers and is calling all of us back to our youthful days of innocence and faith in order to forgive and shield us and them. But people young and old keep choosing to make their own beds and lie in them, instead of in God's.

Jesus lamented God's wayward children as he was overlooking Jerusalem. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." So are we willing to climb above the fray of a society which is losing its way? And from that spiritual mount proclaim good news that God has visited His people?

I woke up early Saturday and was providentially led to the prophet Micah who spoke of a faithful remnant being gathered on the mountain of the Lord. And that out of the little town of Bethlehem would spring forth a new governor whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." How could a new governor come from the ancient of days?

We believe it was a babe born in Bethlehem whose ancient origins came shining through when he was transfigured. And in a world which pays little attention to glorifying God, I am so thankful for faithful remnants like you in little towns all around the nation; remnants who gather at the spiritual mount of the Lord to hear Him speak. And the Word to all of us this week is to climb with him in order to learn more and see more of his glory.

But how does that happen? There are three primary ways that we climb the spiritual mountain and receive God's Word. It comes 1. from the Spirit of Jesus directly through prayer, his Spirit touching ours; 2. from the Bible through regular study; 3. And from the church by committing to worship, fellowship, traditional writings and sermons. God has gathered you to the base of the mountain here today and these are the next steps in your spiritual climb. The season of Lent and Ash Wednesday are the perfect time to begin.

Now we always have to come down off of the mountain and return to society for the sake of gathering in others. I saw a video of a celebrity hairstylist in L.A. doing just that. He gives haircuts and shaves to homeless guys for free in order to remind them how beautiful and clean they are. And what a difference it makes when they feel love and look good! This stylist was lost himself 13 years ago until God gathered him back. And I am sure he shares a bit his own story in order to further encourage them.

So let's first remember that we are prodigal sons and daughters who tend to stray from our heavenly home. And let's commit to a good cleansing at our church home every week in worship. Second, make time-- don't find time, make time-- for God's Word in prayer, study and fellowship so that you might gain eyes to see God's glory are ears to hear God's Word within and around you. And finally, listen to Jesus and do what he says which is summed up here, "Let your good works shine before others so that they, in turn, might give glory to our Father in Heaven." And God's people say...