

### Why the Bible is So Important.

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<sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

<sup>16</sup> But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” <sup>17</sup> Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

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Two weeks ago we had our Annual Voters’ Meeting. It was there we elected or re-elected leaders for our congregation. We allocated the money we got from our trust funds. We also took a survey. Six years ago this congregation told us what they thought were our strengths here at St. Paul’s as well as our weaknesses. Well, two weeks ago we updated that list and what do you think was listed as the greatest strength of St. Paul’s? If you asked me that question last fall I would have said the new lightbulbs. They made a huge difference. But light bulbs are not the greatest strength of this congregation. You said it was the fact that we teach God’s Word in its truth and purity.

You don’t know how wonderful it is to hear that. It is like the wife hearing her husband say that the one thing he cherishes most in this world is his wife. Any pastor is happy to hear that. I know the Lord loves to hear that. The Bible is important to God. He took the time and effort to breath into the human writers the very thoughts and words he wanted written down. He has preserved it over all these centuries so folks like us today can still read it as God’s Word. Jesus tells us to hold to all his teachings. In the epistles we are reminded to let the Word of God dwell in us richly. At the end of Revelation God warns everyone not to add to his Word or take away from it. So we got it right. The most important thing we have going for us is that we have his Word and we teach it in all its truth and purity.

But why is the Bible so important? Because in it and through it God tells us how he saves us.

#### *1. The Bible is important because it tells us how we are saved.*

<sup>13</sup> “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” The fact that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved is a quick reminder that we need saving. Last week the Lord called my 94 year old father to his heavenly home. We are obviously sad, but we are also relieved. He is home in heaven now. That is very good. We had the visitation in Michigan last week Friday and the funeral on Saturday. I had visited with people whom I haven’t seen in years. Funerals do that. They bring people together. More than once someone said, “See you at the next funeral.”

And it is true. We wait until the next funeral. We are trapped in a cycle of birth, life and death like a care stuck in a snow bank spinning its wheels but unable to get out. But that is not what it is was supposed to be. God created us in his image and to eat of the tree of life and live with him forever. But we changed all that. By one man sin entered the world and death through sin. As it says in Pslam 90, **You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning ... We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.** This curse is eternal. You remember the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus. The rich man had everything the world could offer, but when he died he found himself in hell. We need saving.

But that is why the Bible is so important. It tells us we are saved. <sup>13</sup> “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” I always feel a little sorry for Henderson. It is a nice enough town with some nice features, but it seems that every year the flooding river cuts off Henderson from the rest of the world. The only road that is open is 19 from the west. Imagine now how we need saving. We are totally cut off, but God provides one road. Yes, this road is exclusive. It is only one way to be saved. All other roads are blocked. But rejoice. God does provide one way out, and that way is through Jesus Christ. It promises that all who call on his name will be saved.

What does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord? It isn’t prayer. To call on the name of the Lord means to know and believe in God, especially Jesus Christ. Mention the name Edward Francis Keller to me, and I will look at you puzzled. I don’t know an Edward Francis Keller. But mention Henry Koch or Jack Kelly, and my eyes light up because I know them. They are fellow pastors in the area and I knew them all the way back to college days. I can tell you about them. I can tell you how met, what we did together over the years and how we are friends today.

That is what it means to call upon the name of the Lord. It means we know God. We do that every Sunday. We confess him in the creeds. And we don’t just know him. We know what he did for us, how Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary and suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, died, buried, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand and is coming back for us. So we call upon his name because we know him, and we call upon him for our salvation. We throw our sins at the foot of the cross and call upon God to have mercy on us and to forgive us our sins.

That is why the Bible is so important to us. It alone tells us how we are saved. It only makes sense, then, that the Bible needs to be shared.

## *II. So the Bible needs to be shared.*

**<sup>14</sup>How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup>And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”**

Thank God for telling us this. Calling upon the name of Jesus saves us. But how can we call on his name if we don't believe, and how can we believe if we have not heard of him, and how can we hear if someone doesn't preach or tell us, and how can someone tell us if they were not sent to us? Earlier we heard of Jesus calling disciples. He will eventually send them out into the world to share the message of Christ and the cross. And it has a ripple effect. The Apostles shared Christ, others took that message and shared it with others all the way down to congregations like ours.

I get it. With today's technology we can do so much in spreading the gospel. Folks watch us online. Our synod is sending podcasts into places of the world where we cannot send missionaries. The internet can help us in spreading the message. But you can't beat someone coming to another, sharing the message of Christ and salvation. They not only can open the Bible and share it. They can also tell the person what it means to them. They can let it be known what it means to be a sinner who is forgiven and saved. They can see the joy in your face and hear the excitement in your voice.

At my dad's funeral, the pastor shared wonderful gospel comfort with the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm. We needed to hear that. But even non-pastors can and should do the sharing. Countless folks came up with a smile and reminded us of the resurrection. Many cards were sent including many from here. They didn't just rely on the pre-printed message on the card to comfort. They personally wrote personal witnesses of what Christ means to those who die in him.

## *III. So how are we doing?*

God used many folks throughout history to come to us and preach so we may believe and be saved. It is our turn. How are we doing at that? Sadly, only a quarter or less of the world's population calls upon the name of Christ. With abundant churches in our area, there are still many who do not believe. Don't be surprised.

**<sup>16</sup>But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” <sup>17</sup>Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.** In Elijah's day, only 7,000 of the folks in the northern kingdom called upon the name of the Lord. Isaiah's message, though filled with hope and salvation, was believed by a minority. Jesus' hometown tried to kill him. Not all who hear believe. We can't blame God for that. In love he opened up a way to himself through Christ. He attaches no strings or conditions to it. Remember how our text started: <sup>13</sup>**“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** Even though salvation is exclusive, that is, there is only one way through Christ, it includes all. Every person who calls on the name of the Lord is saved. It doesn't matter how many sins you commit or what you have done or not done. Murderers like Paul are included. Prostitutes like Rahab, those who succumb easily to weaknesses like Peter, are included. You and I are included.

Maybe they are too proud to put their trust in Christ. Maybe they are too in love with this world. Maybe they are too confident and convinced themselves they need no help. Who knows. But don't let that discourage you. Many will not believe, but many will. <sup>17</sup>**Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.** Just keep sharing the message for faith is sparked by God through that message. No message, no faith. Share Christ, there is faith.

Yes, the Bible is very important to us. It is our greatest strength. May we continue to share it here and everywhere. Not all will believe, but then again, no one will believe if we don't share it. So, let's do. Amen.