

**Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Lent - Year I**  
**St Peter's 8:30/7:00 Masses - Tuesday, February 28, 2023**

**Isaiah 55:10-11** "My word will not return to me empty, but shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

**Psalms 34:3-18** "The poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and saved from every trouble."

**Matthew 6:7-15** "Do not heap up empty words, thinking you will be heard by your many words."

**No Empty Words**

**Introduction**

Years ago, old Mr. Wallace was our neighbour across the lane. I was preparing my first big garden and I would ask him questions about growing vegetables in the back yard. He had done it all his life and he sure knew how, but he would say: "I just prepare the soil and plant the seeds. God does all the rest."

It doesn't look like it outside, but that time of year is getting closer. On the other hand, it is always that time of year in our hearts. And, as with Mr. Wallace's wisdom, it is always, and only, God who makes the garden grow.

**Isaiah**

Isaiah describes God's word as living and active. It is action and purpose. It is like rain falling from the heavens. It will set life in motion. My word, God says, will accomplish what I purpose. And God's purpose is his plan of salvation for humanity. We can cooperate with that plan. Or, we can oppose it. Joseph and Mary cooperated with God's word and he furthered his plan through them. Herod opposed the plan, but God furthered that plan through him anyway. It looks today like there are too many people against the Word of God for it to succeed. Not so. It is true that many have turned away. It is also true that those of us who are trying to follow God's will are weak, and we will always struggle to allow fruit to grow in our lives.

But we are constantly reminded that God's word and grace are effective. Psalm 119: "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Jeremiah 15: "When I

found your words, I devoured them. They became the joy and the happiness of my heart, because I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts." Deuteronomy 8: "He humbled you to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." That's what Jesus quoted to the devil who suggested that Jesus make bread from stones.

## **Matthew**

From the Gospels, it is very clear that Jesus IS the Word of God fully revealed. He IS God's plan of salvation, who would come down from heaven, like the rain upon the earth, to restore us to intimacy with the Father after it was lost. He does not fail. He keeps the Father's promise that his word will produce fruit. He would not return to the Father until he had accomplished that purpose for which he became one of us.

We listen to the words of God because they come from Jesus, who is THE Word of God. And what are those words today? Don't babble. Stop bugging God with your long list of intentions. He already knows what they are, so stop trying to make sure your list is perfect. That kind of makes it dependent on us instead of on God. It's like we are making a heap of sandbags against an ocean. Your Father in heaven already knows what you need. To pray is not so much to inform God, but to pour out our hearts, like the psalmist today. Stop trying to manipulate God. Instead, turn your hearts to him. Let yourself be watered by that warm gentle rain from heaven.

He gives us the Our Father, the prayer that sons and daughters offer to the God who promises to make our hearts and lives fruitful by his grace, his free gift. These petitions are not empty phrases but the transforming power of God.

It is the Father who gives us Jesus to be our daily bread. When we make his name holy in us, God will act. The work of holiness is grace in us, not our activity or our words, but God's word. It is an act of falling in love with God who will change our hearts and give us amazing grace.

God never acts in vain, without purpose. Neither should we call on God in vain. That's why the second commandment is so important. It often gets forgotten as

less important: "You shall not call on the name of the Lord your God in vain." We tend to think of this as just not swearing using one of God's names. However, it is much worse than that. It means that we don't mean it when we call out to him. We make his word useless in us. God gives us freedom to waste the fruit that his word makes grow.

### **Call To Conversion**

St. Cyprian says: "For what can be a more spiritual prayer than that which was given to us by Christ, by whom also the Holy Spirit was given to us? What praying to the Father can be more truthful than that which was delivered to us by the Son who is the Truth?"

In this first week of Lent, let us seek intimacy with our God, with the words of our mouths, yes, but more with the deepest desire of our hearts. Let us return to him, uniting our hearts to his as we seek today's daily bread for our souls.

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *O Lord, you have been our refuge, from generation to generation. From age to age, you are.*

**Collect:** *Lord, grant that through the chastening effects of bodily discipline, our minds may be radiant with our yearning for you.*

**Isaiah:** *Thus says the Lord, your God: For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth, so shall my word not return to me empty, but it shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

**Psalms:** *I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them. The Lord is near to the broken hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.*

**Gospel Acclamation:** *No one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

**Matthew:** *Jesus began to teach the disciples: "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then in this way 'our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.' If you forgive others your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

**Final Prayer:** *Grant us through these mysteries, Lord, that by moderating earthly desires we may learn to love the things of heaven.*