

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist
John 21:20-25

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Well Christmas day is past and now we are on Dec. 27th a day marked for the writer of the Gospel according to John, the letters of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John and the last book Revelation of Jesus Christ to John. Perhaps by now you have discovered the connection, yes today is St. John the Apostle and Evangelist day. Whether or not it was one person or scribes under John's name writing these works, either way we know that John was important to Christ and the early church. John was the one who chose to see all the signs that Christ was the Son of God, the Chosen one, the anointed, the Good Shepherd, the Healer, the Light of the world, the truth, and the very Word of God.

So John used words to tell us about Jesus. We did not receive any writing from Jesus first hand. On one occasion he wrote something on the ground. That was the time he protected a woman from a public stoning. As you recall he wrote on the ground, and when he was done he said, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone." And everyone walked away. We don't know what he wrote on the ground, perhaps it was their sins, perhaps it was another word of God. But other than that one instance, we don't have any direct written word from Jesus. John on the other hand wrote many words that have lived on through the ages so that we may come to know and believe also.

That Word is very important. But we have taken words for granted. Generally we speak without thinking too much, we don't hold words valuable or truthful or morally upright anymore. Spoken words are just that - words that go out there and are quickly forgotten, if we even hear them at all in the first place. We live in a world of sensory overload, Radio, TV, Internet, Twitter, Blogs, Facebook, U-tube, advertising, words bombard us everyday, shop here, buy this, don't do that, believe me, don't trust them. Words surround us and we have learned to tune them out and ignore most of them. Even the words from the pastor, I know it, because I can do it also when I sit out in the pews. We live in a world that the Word doesn't hold power anymore.

But in John's day, the Word was power. Few people could read or write words. There were not books laying around like today in our homes, in libraries. No magazines in doctor's offices or in schools. The written word was hard to come by and when it was encountered it was valued. John even used that very imagery to define Jesus, as the Word. Jesus is the

Word that spoke creation into being, that went forth from the Creator calling forth light and earth and sea and all life. The Word of God, Jesus who comes to us to show us what God has given to us. Jesus becomes that revealed message of God's love, the very Word of God on earth. He has become God's very message of grace and peace, speaking volumes of love to thousands upon thousands of all times and ages.

But do we listen today? Do we feel the Word of God? When we speak our words are instantaneous and the word passes quickly. We hear it and it is gone. We even tend to forget what we said just the next week, or next day or even the next hour for some. But when we are open to actively listening we not only comprehend the words but also proclaim them as our own words. It gets into our minds, into our hearts, into our dreams and hopes. We make room for the word to enter into our life and dictate part of who we are and what we are about. Think of those words that trigger you, that make you feel the words and hear them, place hope and trust in them. When someone meaningful to you first says they Love you – how do you hear that. When your child first says mommy or daddy – how do you hear that. When a word comes to you that angers you, frustrates you, raises your hairs on the back of your neck, moves you to action, gets you passionate about something, how do you hear that and feel it in your life.

So what would it take for the Word of God to have this same impact in your life, to get your hairs on the back of your neck tingling, to make you passionate, to make you want to rise up and get into action about something that is unjust, morally corrupt, unfair.

In John's world his words that he wrote speaking about Jesus being the Word would have done this to the people hearing it for the first time. He wrote to people of his day and to us even today, so that we might come to know Jesus and to know his testimony is true. This is what they have declared from the beginning, the same thing they heard and had seen with their own eyes, touched with their own hands, concerning the very Word of Life, Jesus Christ. John wrote these words to a people who needed to feel that love. People that were being tortured for their faith, facing death, executions, beatings and imprisonment for their faith. These people wanted to know that what they were doing meant something, wanted to know that this belief was real. John tells them that Jesus is the Word, that the resurrection did happen, that Jesus is the way through to eternal life, out of the horrors of this world. The last book of Revelation gives us this very promise. John has a vision of plagues, wars, violence, hatred, disease, political and natural upheavals of all kinds, but through it all the vision John shares is that God is in charge, the promise of God's peace is the final victory. When John spoke these words it meant something to the people of his day. It meant hope, it

meant life, it meant truth. John wrote these words down so that no one could forget the message of God's love. This is the living word of God that continues on now and always.

So how does it impact us today? Do we still hear those Words and feel them in our hearts? Back in the eighteen hundreds the Western Union office in St. Louis needed to hire a new telegraph machine operator, which paid very well for that day and age. So putting an ad in the paper, they set the hour and time that they would interview possible candidates. One man showed up for the job hoping that he would get such a cushy position with the Western Union. But upon entering their offices he saw dozens if not over a hundred others also standing around, sitting and leaning, and filling the outer offices waiting their chance to be interviewed. As disappointed as he was he decided to try anyway, and the secretary who was sitting behind her desk absently tapping her pencil on the stack of clip boards, kindly handed him one and told him to fill it out and wait for his invite in. And so as the secretary went back to her absent tapping he took the clip board and went to fill out his form. But within a minute or two that same young man took his clip board and to the astonishment of everyone in that room, just walked over to the managers office and went right in. Expected him to be thrown out, the crowd of wannibe applicants weren't surprised when the managers door opened again, but they sure were when the manger stuck his head out and said that the position had been filled and everyone else was excused. The thing was that the secretary was tapping in Morse code an invite to receive the job all one had to do is go into the managers office. Everyone had come to get this cushy job, but only that one man heard that message and it changed his life.

Thanks to St. John and others like him we are given the Word of God, a message of grace, love, and commitment that empowers us to change our lives. Because of these words we have come to know of Jesus the Christmas gift, Jesus the Resurrection, the Life everlasting. Let us hear that invite and know that message and be moved by the power of those words this day and always. Let us live as People of God's Truth, God's Word. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.

AMEN.