

Water is powerful. Water brings life, and water brings death and destruction. I drove through Coon Valley earlier this week to get my daughter to take a nap. I remembered back in late August of 2018 when I first got here, Coon Valley had flooded, damaging much of the downtown. I remember seeing the pumpkins caught in the guardrails and the park being utterly destroyed with floods. I remember using a shop vac to remove water from my basement as the rains fell down. Water is powerful.

Also, as I drove to Coon Valley earlier this week, I looked at the green fields all around me and the bluffs dotted with growing and thriving trees. I also thought, “Water is powerful.” Despite all the civil and political unrest in our country, despite all the disruption and lockdown from coronavirus, the fields are growing with crops. Each one of those plants in the field would not be there growing without the help of the rain of the heavens, watering and making it grow. Water brings life.

And so it is with God’s Word. The Lord speaks to us through the Words of the prophet Isaiah saying, **“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”** God’s Word is powerful and effective. Our theme for today: **GOD’S EFFICACIOUS WORD DELIVERS US JESUS.**

Efficacious. You’ve probably never heard that word, or only heard it at church. Efficacious means that something always produces its intended result. It is always effective. An efficacious Coronavirus vaccine would prevent patients from contracting Coronavirus 100% of the time.

Just as the rain and snow cannot help but water the earth as they fall, so too, God’s Word cannot help but to affect change in the hearts of hearers. It is in this way that we can say that God’s Word is efficacious.

But you might say, what about my neighbor down the street who left the church? What about my cousin who doesn’t believe anything? How can God’s Word be efficacious in their lives? First, I. God's efficacious Word delivers us Jesus' judgment.

The primary work of water is to give life, yet it still can destroy. Lifeguards exist because water, which is meant to give us life, can drown us. FEMA exists in part to support those who have dealt with the damaging works of water: flooding, tidal waves, and hurricanes. Sometimes, water can destroy.

God’s Word delivers us Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God incarnate. And this Word of God brings life. That is the Word’s primary function. Yet this word has a different function, a secondary function. It can bring judgment.

God Himself says, “**“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.”** Just as water can drown life, can erode shores, and destroy buildings, so too can God’s Word tear down and destroy. Jesus is our savior, but He will also come again to be our judge.

God’s Word is efficacious, and in some cases, it is achieving its goal and intended result when it falls on deaf ears. The powerful Word of God was in the seed that fell on the path which got snatched up by ravens. The powerful Word of God was on the rocky soil which sprung up but the sun shriveled away. The powerful Word of God was in the thorn infested ground even though the weeds choked out the sprouts.

And so too, the Word of God falls into our hearts, the hard pavement that is our hearts that doesn’t want to listen. God’s Word falls into our hearts, the rocky soil that springs up excited, but shrinks away under persecution. God’s Word falls into our hearts, yet the worries of life choke away that word from growing.

But it is even in the midst of destruction there is new life. After a flood plants spring up from the mud. Birds and animals find new places from which to drink water. Buildings are rebuilt newer, stronger, and better. God’s Word causes destruction as our sins are condemned, but it clears the path for a stronger, healthier, better trust in him.

Second, II. God's efficacious Word delivers us Jesus' life. The main use of water is to bring new life. Everyone here is a testament to this as without water, you would have no life. We can only go a few days without water before dying. So too, God’s Word delivers you life by giving you Jesus.

In hearing His Words of forgiveness, the message of the cross is delivered to you. In hearing His Words of eternal life, Christ’s third day resurrection is delivered to you. In hearing His Words of salvation, Christ’s glorious reign with the Father is delivered to you.

God’s Word gives us life. The Psalmist writes, “**Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.**” I need Jesus delivered to me in His Word. You need Jesus delivered to you in His Word. His promises keep us afloat. His Word gives us life.

And we don’t need God’s Word just once and we’re done. We need to hear His Word again and again like the plants of the field need rain again and again. “**As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.**” We need to hear that God loves us again and again. We need to hear that we’re forgiven again and again, especially when we sin daily and are in need of forgiveness.

Why listen to God’s Word again and again? Isaiah writes, **“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”** This Word of God delivered to us again and again delivers the same thing that consistent rains deliver to a corn field: crops that are full grown and ready for the harvest. This Word of God’s forgiveness and life eternal will have us grow into everlasting life as God’s efficacious Word continually has its way with us.

God’s Word kills and makes alive. It can fall on deaf ears and further confirm them in their deafness, or it can prick consciences and wake them up. In this way, we can say with confidence III. God's efficacious Word always accomplishes its task.

In Canada, there’s a saying that the Mountie always gets his man. This means that if you commit a crime in Canada, the police are going to catch you. We could say the same thing of God’s Word preached, read, and taught. Jesus through His Word always gets his man.

And this is our hope as Christians in the midst of disaster, discord, and division. The Word is powerful and effective. The Word is efficacious. And that’s what we hang our hats on. That a lowly pastor like me in preaching and teaching God’s Word even unclearly, even imperfectly, even mumbling through a mask still is able to deliver God’s Word that kills and makes alive, that brings forgiveness and judgment. It still does its job, just as water can’t help but water the earth when it falls down as rain or snow.

God’s Word is efficacious. It’s always working powerfully, so you too can be bold in proclaiming your faith to your friends, neighbors, and relatives. Even if someone rejects what you have to say, you know that the Lord is working quietly and powerfully to enact His will.

Someone once said, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” We can certainly take this to heart as we share our faith and hear God’s Word. God’s Word is always acting in the hearts of those who hear it, even if the speaker isn’t eloquent, charismatic, or clever.

Whether it be quenching our thirst after a long walk or an overflowing river washing out railroad tracks, water is powerful. Just as water is powerful to give life and to destroy, so too is God’s Word powerful and effective. God’s Word is efficacious and brings us Jesus. Sometimes Jesus works through the Word to enact creative destruction, tearing down our idols. Often Jesus works through the Word to give us new life. May we drink deeply from God’s powerful Word. Amen!