

Study 5 – Week of March 14, 2022

THE WORD WORKS!

My word that goes out from my mouth: will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. – Isaiah 55:11

Not long ago I sat out in front of St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Garland, Texas with grateful tears in my eyes. The building hadn't changed much in 53 years. I could still see my kindergarten teacher, Miss Anne, in the corner room teaching me Bible stories and modeling the love of Jesus. There was the janitor that saved a bag of pecans for me from the trees on the playground. I could see Father Michael, rubbing ashes on our foreheads that he took from his Folgers coffee can on Ash Wednesday. Most of all, I could see the life-sized crucifix over the altar that proclaimed the sacrifice of Christ for my sins.

All those people are gone now and no one from the present congregation sees me. I'm invisible to them. But not to God. To God, I'm the little child he nurtured in Jesus for one kindergarten year at this archaic early childhood learning center just one mile from my parental home. How could Miss Anne or any of them have seen all the sermons and Bible studies I've been privileged to preach. How could they see the foreign soil to which I've carried the gospel? How could they see that the ripple they started in my heart has been a ministry tidal wave for three decades? How could they see that they saved my soul forever? They couldn't see. But now I ask, do you see?

Jesus is helping you see! Look at what his prophet says,

*My word that goes out from my mouth:
will not return to me empty but will accomplish what
I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
– Isaiah 55:11*

We won't see the children we teach 53 years from now, but Jesus will. He will smile in sublime satisfaction when he sees their faith and lives. When we spend our week fielding questions about masks and vaccine protocol, budget talks with our board, staffing issues that never end and calling parents whose children left our center with teeth marks on their thighs, it's easy to lose sight of our wonderfully powerful mission.

We give these children the word of God while they're still wet cement. That's when we brazen into their souls the word's, "Jesus Loves me." That's when we give them an indelible memory of what the cross of Jesus really means. We establish for them the six days of creation and a Christian world view. We set the stage for them to be resilient against humanistic influences later and inoculate them against self-made gender dysphoria. They learn from us their unique value and divinely ordered individuality as a "special edition" child of God. We teach them the Bible stories in their chronological order. They learn to feel at home in the Bible's divine love story.

We aren't just slapping bricks down each day at the ECE center, our school, or our high school. We aren't just building a wall either. We're raising an edifice of faith, hope and love in the lives of human beings that will live long after us. God's word works! So, keep planting it vigorously in the hearts of the children and students while you have them. It will not return to Jesus void and empty. No, not at all!

Points to Ponder

What are some ways we lose sight of the immense power of the word, when we are in the thick of everyday ministry?

Name two or three people you look forward to thanking in heaven for teaching you the word. Today, tell someone about them and what they taught you?

Name as many verses or Bible stories that you can which showcase God's promise or illustration of the power of his word?

Why is it invigorating to our ministry to celebrate seeds planted in hearts as much as members gained for the church?

Reflection

Prayer

Dear Jesus, I'm sorry for losing my focus in the ministry of the gospel to children we serve. Thank you for encouraging me that your word works even when I can't see how. Give me the wisdom, faith, and strength to keep sowing your powerful word in the hearts of the children and their parents. When I let your word work in my heart it makes my work a much more meaningful and satisfying task. By your Holy Spirit, keep me mindful of the enormous value my daily teaching of the word has in the lives of everyone you entrust to me. Amen.

Continue to ponder on the thoughts of this study by reading through the following passages at the end of the day or each day throughout the week for encouragement from God's Word.

Psalm 1, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 55, Mark 4:1-34, Luke 10:38-42, Luke 19:11-27, Hebrews 4:12