

**The Word** (James 1:21 “welcome with meekness the implanted word”  
James 1:21 “but be doers of the word”)

The Word of God is dynamic. A happening.

Back in the days of what is sometimes referred to as, Charismatic Renewal – late 1960s and 1970s I came to meet pastors in the Pentecostal churches. They were very warm and loving towards us, traditional denomination people – though I always wore my clerical collar – to let them know that I wasn’t going to get too carried away by any Pentecostal ecstasy.

What I discovered being with them in services I attended, was, they were always expecting something to happen. When the Word was preached they expected results. Critics were concerned that some of the outcomes were, “not of God” as they put it. But if you read Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth you find that the Holy Spirit will sometimes upset the way we have always “done church”. Cause us to re-think.

The Word is much more than simply a verbal expression of truth. It is dynamic. It is an event. It is something to throw you down on your face in wonder and awe. –

eg Isaiah in the temple, Paul on the way to Damascus.

Because the Word of God is, God being present in all his saving majesty and power, his love, and grace.

The Word is something to make us sit on the edge of our seats – or rather, as if in a sky diving plane, to get up off our seats, line up at the door, be ready to jump, and to do it –this time without a parachute – because it’s in faith, and we are trusting ourselves entirely to the Lord for what happens next. We know the final outcome will be good. We don’t know what it’s going to feel like on the way.

Staying with the Pentecostals. Some of the things reported were bizarre, over the top. Just the same in Corinth. Paul had to caution them – give them guidelines. But never did he say –“Put the fire out- ignore the Word.”

At Glendowie I love to hear our minister/pastor preach. He conveys his own excitement about being set-apart to listen to God while preparing the message.

He is excited about being called to deliver it.

**The Word, though, needs more than a fired-up, Spirit-filled preacher. It also needs good soil** if it to accomplish God's purpose and bear fruit. That's where the rest of us come in.

Our own preparation for hearing the Word is critical for the harvest. In a fellowship where the whole congregation is expecting God to act through his Word – that's where grace will abound. Where sinners will have their hearts melted, where the guilty will find forgiveness and come to repentance, where the sick will be healed, where the call will come – to go and make disciples of all nations - and that call will be answered.

Just the opposite happened at Nazareth the time Jesus returned and spoke at the synagogue. They were all suspicious. Got stuck into his family connections. Hard, unrelenting. Ears closed.

*Matthew says, "He did not do many mighty works there." Mt 13:58*

Mark is even more telling – *"He could do no mighty works there... and he marvelled because of their unbelief." Mk 6:5*

Let's be in expectation Saturday night onwards, Sunday morning when we wake – *"This is the day the Lord has made* and something wonderful is going to happen this morning". The Word is going to go forth, and it will accomplish God's purpose, and I'm going to be there, see it happen, be part of it, be changed - Hallelujah!

**Often when we speak about "the Word of God" what we are referring to is the bible.** You can't say that's wrong. It's just that to see the Word as being only what's written on the page – that's not nearly enough.

What God says and does today is not going to be in conflict with the scriptures but it is much bigger. Because *"the Word of God is living and active dividing between soul and spirit" (Ref?)*

I think back to the times in our denomination when there were divisions between the liberals and the conservative (fundamentalist) believers. We were so prone to have arguments over words, interpretations.

What a fresh experience of the Holy Spirit gave to many, was the wonderful awareness of the presence of God, right here and now. Not locked away into the pages of the bible (authorised version or not).

The bible still of first importance, of course, but the text of the bible is alive, contemporary.

So you could say with 1 John -

“We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at, touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it...”

Eg – there was Noel dead against his wife’s faith and trust in Jesus – and he got bowled over – went and enrolled at Bible College, and with his wife took off for mission in Japan – did 20 years there.

Eg – there was Margaret whose severe mental condition was healed – they went as missionaries to Zambia.

The Word is not limited to a simple verbal expression.

The Word comes as a direct personal challenge to you and me – direct from God.

Scripture is the witness to all that God has done and is doing in his world.

**We all know something of the Reformation.** The Protestant Reformation where Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and the rest of them, rediscovered the central importance of the Word of God. But we so often limit this to words written on a page think they just got the formula right.

They rediscovered THE WORD. A reality much vaster and more exciting than any ink on a page. Revelation is above all, a deed, an action. It is this deed, this happening which is The Word.

God acts by his Word. He speaks by his action. (Hallelujah again! Praise God.)

**This is not to downplay the importance of proclamation. What we are doing here together this morning – together (your amens, your prayers, your faith)**

The Word is something that can be announced.

*1Tim.4:2 Proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable...”*

*Acts 8:4 (following the stoning of Stephen) “Now those who were scattered went from place to place proclaiming the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria...”*

**For the Word of God has two, elements (functions).**

**(1) There is the conveying of knowledge -**

*“How are they to believe in one in whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? Romans 10:14*

This is usually going to happen through the pulpit or personal sharing of the good news.

Wonderfully it also happens through God's direct revelation – as with Paul journeying to Damascus. As we read happens for example, in Muslim countries today. There are some amazing testimonies of visions coming to those who in places where there cannot be the usual presentation of the gospel.

(2)The mention of the Word coming through a direct revelation is an example of the second aspect of the Word of God –

there is the conveying of knowledge AND

(2) there is this Dynamic Element.

The Word is not somehow detached from God. The Word is found in a living and intimate relationship with the God. It comes from God. God is speaking. God is acting in and through his Word.

eg We are so privileged at the end of our services to be able to come up and have someone pray with us. We will experience blessing. This is the applying of what has already taken place with the declaring of the Word through the preaching, the readings, the songs – the whole proclamation.

Preacher and congregation- don't let's be limited by the words that are flowing (or not!) Didn't Paul say to the Corinthians that he came with hesitant speech –

*1 Cor.2:1 "When I came to you brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom... I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling...my speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power..."*

**Something else - the Word of God is not confined to a building -** The idea that if only we could get him or her to church they would experience God. God is out there. In the world he has created. Speaking to men and women. It's so easy to lose sight of this. He's much greater than we think. Maybe it's for us to do a lot of listening. Sometimes there will be the opportunity to say, as Paul did at Athens, "The power you have sensed, been worshipping, we can tell you more, who he is – He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ".

eg in my years of hospital chaplaincy I was amazed at the number of people who told me they had had some remarkable experience, they couldn't explain. It was supernatural. They'd quickly add, "I've never told anyone about this,

but...” So I was able to say – that lines up with things we have in the bible – let me tell you....

### **It's by The Word that God intervenes in his world.**

It was by the Word that God created the heavens and the earth.

It is by the Word that God reveals himself to men and women.-

From the Christmas readings we know John 1 by heart –

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.”

Then a few verses down, verse 14 – the Word came as a person. Amazing. –

*“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.”*

**See how it all ties up, fits together.**

We weren't here in the first century to meet Jesus in the flesh. But we experience the Word. We have the record of Jesus life on earth, his birth, his teaching, his cross, his resurrection.

We have received his promised Holy Spirit, the One who right now is interpreting the Word, pointing us to Jesus, illuminating the scriptures.

It is in his illuminating of the scriptures that we will hear the Word of God now, afresh -living and active –

It is in the Holy Spirit's illuminating the scriptures -

that the miracle takes place – where this is no dull historical record – it becomes for us the living voice of God addressing us by name –

Grahame – I want you to pay attention to this call to speak to these people

Mary – I am here to comfort you in your loss

Sue – It's time that you made your peace with that neighbour

Lindsay, in your illness – I am your refuge and your strength, a very present help in time of trouble.

**The Holy Spirit creates nothing new. He applies the Word. He connects us to the power source. With the Father and the Son, he is the power!**

Jesus said of the Spirit – John 16:14

*“He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”*

### **Where does the church fit in?**

**It's in this proclaiming, living by the Word, declaring the Word, that the church happens.** The church is not like any other association. It's the place where the Word is working intensely, refining, calling, declaring, preparing for even greater things to come.

When Peter and John were released from prison – in prison for preaching the Word – When they were released the church prayed – Acts 4:29

*“Grant to your servants to speak the word with all boldness.”*

*And when they prayed this prayer the place where they were praying was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.” v.31.*

This is how they went about it. They proclaimed Jesus – Son of God, Saviour. No, they didn’t just recite his teaching. They preached the Word. To preach the Word is to preach Jesus Christ.

Because they preached Jesus the message was accompanied by amazing signs and wonders – demonstrations of the spirit and of power. The account is full of them – miracles – miracles of healing, miracles of love, miracles of changed lives.

Praise God – the Bible is not a collection of sentences. The bible is testimony to the Word –

to the creative, redemptive work of God in Christ.

As you and I continue to live by the power of the Word and to grow in our sensitivity and obedience to the Word may we be alert for the moment when God will use our words and our lives to declare his Word.

And may the Holy Spirit accompany that proclamation with signs and wonders that glorify his name.

What a privilege to be called as part of this Body – the Body of Christ.