

Easter 3A, 2011

Text: 1 Peter 1:17-25

Title: Flowers and Words

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Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Easter is a time for baptisms. We celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, and the new life that we have in him.

Last week we were blessed to celebrate the rite of Holy Baptism for Brooklyn and Briella Konrath. On Saturday Caiden Michael Dodson will be baptized. We also remember our own baptisms each week as we make the sign of the cross at the triune name that was put upon us at our baptism.

Baptism was the most important day of your life. It's at the center of your life as a Christian. It defines who you are and whose you are. We've left the baptismal font here in the center to remind you of this fact.

Last week we heard how you were given new birth into a living hope, that you had an eternal inheritance in heaven that gives you hope in the midst of the poverty all around you.

This week, our lesson on baptism from 1 Peter continues. Peter tells you, "You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

Last Fall Amberleigh and I did lots of planting. We planted crocuses, daffodils, iris, tulips, and hyacinths. We waited all winter for them to sprout and grow and bloom. We were so excited when the first little green shoots came up from the ground, followed by leaves and then buds and finally flowers. We rejoiced in the beauty and the colors.

But it didn't last long. In fact most of them are done blooming already. A few hyacinth and a couple tulips remain, but that's it.

Flowers don't last. Even if they bloom all summer, they fade and die with the winter and the snow and the frost and the cold.

The Ladies of the congregation will receive a carnation as they leave this morning. Many of you will give or receive flowers for Mother's Day. Those cut flowers will be lucky to still be blooming next Sunday.

Flowers don't last. Everyone knows this.

All the way back 2500 years ago, Isaiah wrote, "The grass withers and the flowers fade." Yes, we all know that. "But," he also wrote, "The Word of the Lord remains forever."

The flowers are the only things that wither and fade. Everything around us is dying. Cars rust. Houses crumble. Clothes wear out.

But the Word of the Lord remains forever.

The Word of the Lord remains forever because God remains forever. Bibles wear out. Pastors come and go. But the Lord's word does not change, it does not go away, because God remains forever.

God's Word is the way that God relates to you and interacts with you.

God does not speak to you internally through your thoughts and feelings and emotions. Just because you feel something or think something doesn't mean that it comes from God. In fact, most of our thoughts and feelings and urges run contrary to God's Word. Our body and our mind tell us to do the exact opposite of what God says.

And God doesn't speak to you through nature or the world around you. Yes, you can see some beautiful flowers and trees and mountains and sunsets. But a tree can never tell you that God loves you. A mountain cannot tell you that Jesus died for you.

If you want to know what God has to say to you, the only place to look is in His word, to listen to Him there.

This is how God relates to you- not through your emotions or some sort of inner voice, not through His creation, but through His Word.

God's Word brings His Spirit and His Spirit brings life. You were born again through God's Word and Spirit in Holy Baptism.

We confess that in Holy Baptism, God does all the work.

It's not about you. It's not about your parents and sponsors. It's not even about the pastor. When someone asks you- who baptized you, the best answer is "God." God uses human hands, but He is the one doing all the work.

That's why we baptize even infants, because it's not about you or your faith or your words or your deeds. There's nothing that you can do to qualify yourself to make yourself good enough to be baptized.

God does all the work.

And does the work through His Word. In baptism God forgives your sins, rescues you from death and the devil, and gives you eternal salvation.

In the Small Catechism the question is asked, "How can water do such great things?" Hopefully you remember the answer, "Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water

that does these things, along with faith, which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is simple water only and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of new birth in the Holy Spirit."

God's Holy Spirit gives you life, and He does so through God's Word. God works through His Word- when He baptizes, when He forgives, when He creates and strengthens faith.

The good news is that the Word of the Lord remains forever. Other things in your life will change, they will fade away.

Loved ones may move away or die. Jobs will come and go. Things that you thought were certain and stable will crumble and fall.

But not God's Word, especially that word of God spoken you at your baptism.

You belong to God. His Name was put on your forehead with the water. Nothing can change that fact. That word remains forever. Not your sin, not death, not the power of the devil. You belong to Him, you were bought, ransomed by God Himself.

St. Peter writes, "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."

You were bought with the blood of Christ. In baptism you were crucified with Christ. That's why we make the sign of the cross to remember our baptism. We remember that we've been crucified with Christ, bought with His blood, and that we belong to Him.

That is certain, that is sure, that Word of God will last forever.

And, since it's mother's day, go ahead and give your mom some flowers. But also give her something that will last. Speak God's Word to her, remind her that she's baptized.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!