

Video: Word of God, Speak~~~

The date was Monday, March 5, 2012. A dear young woman of our congregation had been killed in a multiple fatality accident as she travelled north from Bowling Green State University to the Toledo airport with some sorority sisters. I was in my truck, going south of Springfield on Route 68 to meet with her parents and sister. I knew this family well and I loved this family much. I had baptized and confirmed this vibrant, bright, talented, and beautiful young lady. Her lovely grandmother is also a member of Grace and I knew this would break her heart. I, admittedly, had no idea what I would say to this family enveloped in grief. What could I, or anyone, say? No words could possibly reduce the pain of such a sudden, tragic, and inexplicable loss.

Just as I reached the south side of Yellow Springs, this song I'd never heard before came over the radio. I immediately turned into the little motel parking lot on my right, put my truck in park, and listened to this song. As I heard the words and music, tears began streaming down my face. My concern, my own personal grief, my anxiety about the about-to-occur visit was being addressed as only God could address it. God, I believe, was saying to me: 'Dan~~don't worry about the words you might say or the silence you might keep. I will speak to you and through you to this family. Let the Word of God speak!'

And, so I did. I honestly don't remember what was said as I was invited into the family's living room. I don't know what I said to them. I don't know what they said to me. I do, though, vividly remember this song and the wisdom expressed through it. I remember reciting the words to this song as I began my funeral sermon here at Grace on March 7th. In life, we too often focus upon, worry about, and plan for what we are going to say. In life, we too often fail to listen to God's Word and what God wants to say to and through us. Thus, we have been singing this

month: *'Lord, speak to us, that we may speak.'* When Christians have heard and know the Word of God, only then do we really have anything of value to say!

'Word of God, speak. Would you pour down like rain, washing my eyes to see, Your majesty. To be still and know, that You're in this place; Please let me stay and rest, in Your holiness. Word of God, speak.' As Moses directed the grumbling Israelites...we must turn to God. As Jesus said to his confused disciples, it is God's Word and Jesus' name that identifies and unites Christ's Church on earth. As James writes in his Epistle, the power and privilege of prayer must not be neglected.

Only 13 verses earlier in the Epistle of James, the author writes: *'Listen up, you rich people!'* Many people, during my ministry, have conveniently skipped over these verses, falsely assuming that these ancient words don't really apply to them. These verses from James apply to us, let's be sure. 'Rich' is relative. Do you know that most of the world's population has never even sat in a car, much less owned or driven one? Most of the world's population cannot afford to buy a hamburger, as we might do with little thought or sacrifice.

No matter how much money we have, someone has more and most people have far less. The real issue for our consideration is this: Not whether we have money, but whether our money has us! James was touching the timeless nerve regarding the danger of materialism, the danger of being possessed by our possessions. Money is deceptive. Very subtly money can become the focus of our lives, the object of our personal worship. Wealth is not condemned in the Bible, nor in this congregation. Abraham was rich [Gen. 13:2]. King David was rich [1 Chron. 29:28]. Solomon was rich. Joseph of Arimathea was rich [Mt. 27:57]. Barnabas was rich [Acts 4:36-37]. Lydia, also known as Dorcas, was rich [Acts 15:11 ff].

The issue is not how much God has enabled us to have, but how much God is enabling us to give. *'Word of God, speak.'* Put another way, the

challenge is in discerning how much to keep, not how much to give away.
'Word of God, speak...'

We prayerfully sang, *'Oh, fill us with your fullness, Lord, Until our very hearts o'er-flow. In kindling thought and glowing word, Your love to tell, your praise to show.'* As we gather this morning at Grace, this Consecration Sunday morning, may we each dare ask ourselves: *'Is my heart overflowing?'* If our hearts are, in fact, overflowing, the figures we write down on our Estimate of Giving Cards...the ministries to which we commit ourselves for the coming year...will be generous and God-pleasing. Our stewardship, our very living and giving, will tell of God's love and show God the honor and praise He is due.

Honoring and praising God! That, after-all is what this day...and every day...is all about at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church!

Amen.