

# "Trust God's Wisdom and Power"

Text: Isaiah 55:6-11

Oh that I had a thousand voices to praise my God with thousand tongues  
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices, would then proclaim in grateful songs  
To all, wherever I might be, what great things God that done for me. (TLH 30)

Fellow Servants of our truly awesome, omnipotent (all-powerful)  
Creator-God:

Both our Christian faith and our God are under attack, and one would be hard-pressed to find anything more profoundly foolish. God himself founded the Christian Church, and he promised that even **"the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** <sup>ESV</sup>(Matthew 16:18) This is important for Christians to remember when the opposition seems so overwhelming and the very threads of civilized society seem to be unraveling before our eyes. In fact the only thing more foolish than the current war being waged against God's Church is the war being waged against God himself. I can think of no endeavor more certain to end in catastrophic failure. Don't be fooled. Nothing and no one can hope to succeed when they make war on God.

And yet at times it seems like the forces of evil are winning, doesn't it? Rest assured they are not. They cannot. It's just that the loudest voices are those that we tend to hear, and the loudest voices today all seem to be shouting that God is dead, and that the time of Christianity (including Christian morality) has passed. Repeating nonsense does not make it any more true or right. If the entire world were to shout in unison that the sun rises in the west and sets in the east, that wouldn't suddenly make it true. If vast crowds all proclaim that man created God, that wouldn't make the idea any less ridiculous. But, again, it can *feel* that way, at least for a time – especially when the godless seem to own all the megaphones.

There is really nothing new in all of this. A defiant, vocal segment of every society has always rebelled against their Creator – has always stubbornly resisted and denied him – and they have all come to utter failure and ruin. Every single one. It is an immutable truth that man can never succeed when he fights against his God. So then what we are dealing with here really has more to do with perception or emotion than it does with truth or fact, and this morning we seek therefore to address the *perception* that the power of our God is fading, and to compare that *feeling* with the *facts* that he has revealed to us in his Word. Our goal is

to learn to recognize and to better trust the wisdom and the power of our God.

The text that will instruct and comfort us this morning is found in the Book of Isaiah, the 55<sup>th</sup> Chapter:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 55:6-11** **"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. <sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup> "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, <sup>11</sup> 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."**

This is God's Word. In humble acknowledgement that these words from our God represent truth and light, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

Just as things like art and history both need a certain distance or perspective to be grasped, the same is often true of God's power in our lives. We get so caught up in the little things that we lose the big picture. That's part of what we want to correct this morning.

Atheistic historians have long claimed that man created both the Christian religion and the concept of God. They claim to have identified an evolution of religion and of man's perception of God over the centuries. Yet the Christian faith did not begin with the birth or death of Jesus Christ. It is the same religion that God established from eternity and revealed first to Adam and Eve. The only part that man played in the creation of the Christian faith is that we created the *need* for God to send his Son. In other words, we created only the problem, not the solution, let alone the entire religion.

Historians believe that man created the Christian religion, in part, because they can see no record of anyone calling himself a Christian prior to about 50 AD. (See Acts 11:26) The fact is Adam and Eve were Christians, for they trusted in that first promise of God to send a

Savior – Christ Jesus. Yet since Jesus had not yet been born, let alone named, of course they would not call themselves “Christians.” Same with Abraham, the focal or divergent point of the three dominant world religions. The Jews claim him as the father of the Jewish nation and the Muslims claim him as the father of the Muslim nations, but Abraham was, above all, a Christian. He too placed his trust in God's promise that **“in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”** (Genesis 22:18) The **“blessing”** that benefits **“all nations”** is – *and can only be* – Jesus Christ, the One who paid for the sins of all mankind.

Secular historians also buy into the silly notion that since God does not talk to *everyone* (more specifically to them) that he really therefore communicated with *no one*. Again, they thus credit man with the creation of God - men like Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, and Joseph Smith; men who, in their opinion, only *imagined* that they talked with God, and thus created ever evolving religions.

Some of the problems with this sort of view of the history of religions are obvious. Such a view obviously undermines what we have come to know and believe about our God. Other dangers might not be so obvious, and it is those that we examine this morning, in particular the idea that the Christian religion is outdated, impotent, and fading away, having been superseded by “new and improved” beliefs. Naturally then they also imagine that God is not living, active, and powerful in his dealings with us today.

For guidance, we turn again to these words from our text – powerful and revealing words that form the bedrock of our understanding of God: **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”**

The basic message here is that, far from *creating* God, man cannot even comprehend God. We are simply not capable, since he is infinitely greater and unimaginably more complex. It is the worm trying to comprehend the fisherman, or the ant the universe in which it lives. We cannot even *begin* to grasp that which is infinitely greater than ourselves. We are rather told by our God through the Psalmist: **“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”** (Psalm 46:10)

Is that the end of it then? Is that all there is to the Christian religion – *“You can't fully understand God, so don't even try”*? Obviously not. We

are to cling to what has been revealed to us, what we are capable of understanding, and yet we are also to acknowledge that that is not all there is to our God. That same Psalmist concluded Psalm 46 with these words: **“The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.”** The two statements have to be taken together, and when they are, we gain the profound sense of comfort and assurance that our God wants us to possess. We are indeed supposed to “let God be God,” but we are also to take great comfort in the fact that this same God, who is wise and knowing beyond our ability to comprehend, is nonetheless living, active, and powerful among us still today.

How are we to understand or grasp this apparent contradiction or paradox? How does such truth help us in a practical way in our lives today? We can grasp the truth that our God is so far above us that we could never fully comprehend or “wrap our minds” around him, yet how are we to understand him as **“with us”** even today? How can we accept that we cannot comprehend God, but still recognize and appreciate his power and presence among us?

Part of the challenge here is that we live in a time when God does not whisper new truth into the ear of his prophets. This ought not alarm us. There have been many such times down through history. In 1 Samuel 3:1 we read: **“And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.”** Not long after, however, God began his ongoing dialog with the Prophet Samuel. We are again in an era when **“there is no widespread revelation”** but only in the sense of new and different revelation. God speaks today, but he does so in the firmly established words of our Bibles. Far from being a reason to doubt the existence or power of God, this should be for each of us a most comforting truth. Things are different now in that the Savior has been born and we have received the complete Bible as our infallible guide. Those who accept the idea of continuing revelation (through popes or prophets or councils or dreams) can never be sure what they are to believe from one day to the next. We have no such fear or uncertainty. God's timeless truth has been recorded, perfectly and permanently.

The danger, however, is that we come to doubt God's *power* among us today because we fail to identify the obvious evidence of his presence among us. God *is* living, active, and powerfully working among us today, but he does so primarily *through his holy Word*. Our text puts it this way: **“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, <sup>11</sup> 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.***” Again in the New Testament we have this assurance: ***“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”*** (Hebrews 4:12-13)

We hear such words, but how often do we really take the time to contemplate what they mean. When we bring the Word of God – the law and the gospel – into the life of a human being, we are actually wielding the very power of God. The same God who created the universe has also promised to bring his unfathomable power to bear *through that word*. Ask yourself: *Do you believe that God can be trusted?* Because God is the one who has promised in our text to ***“accomplish what he pleases”*** through his Word. Do you believe Jesus? Because Jesus told us that ***“All power has been given to me, in heaven and on earth.”*** It is not our business to try to understand exactly what pleases our God in every instance, and here is where we tend to drift into oncoming traffic. We imagine that God’s will must be the same as our will, that what pleases us must be what pleases God. Then, when God does not do exactly what we want, we come to doubt his power and promise. How foolish. How naïve. How ridiculous. Yet how do we avoid this? How do we “stay in our lane”? We focus on what we know to be his will for our lives, his job description for our time of grace here on this earth. Because that’s clear. That we can know. His will is that we *trust* the *power* of his word, and that we bring that power into the lives of every single human being – *including our own*. That’s exactly how Jesus told us to spend our time of grace, isn’t it – to share with the world everything that he taught us?

What then is the expected result of the working of this living, active, powerful word of God? While we cannot know the whole picture, we can know the greatest part – the creation and preservation of saving faith, together with the eternal life that results. Before you dismiss that with an *“Oh, that”* consider for a moment what could possibly have a more lasting impact on any human being? Eternity is forever. You and I have been entrusted with the power that can turn a human being from eternal death to eternal life. This is the very message of hope that Jesus Christ has given us, the power that he wants us to put to use. The power of

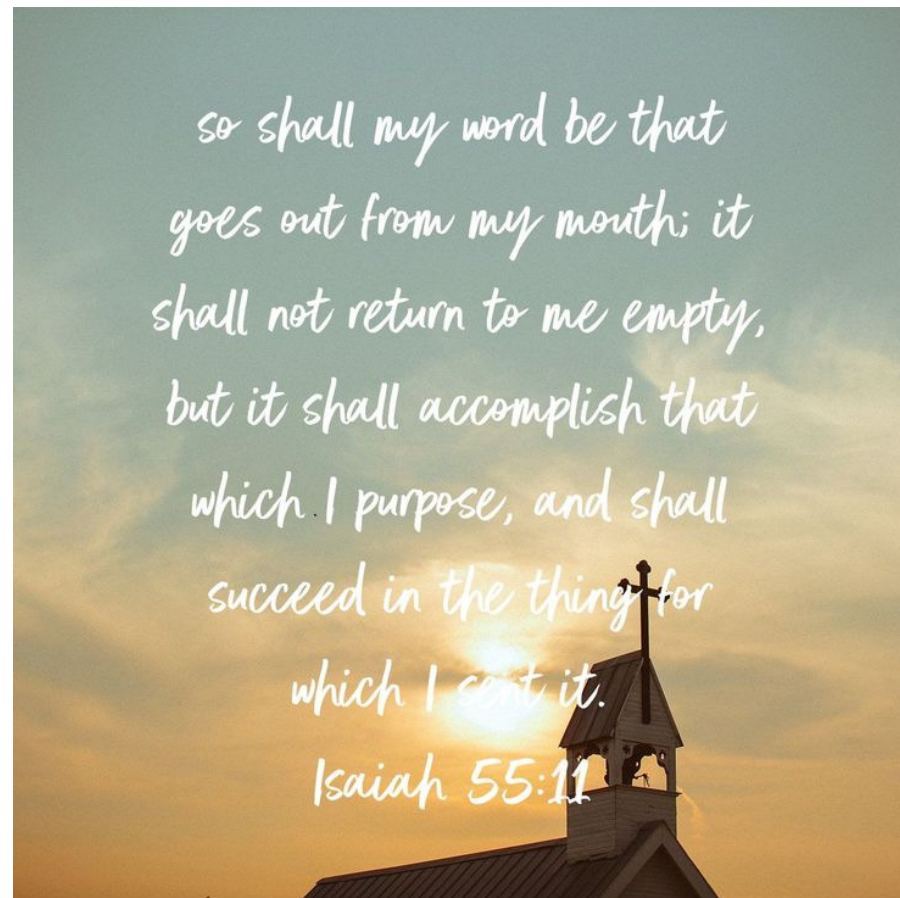
that message is masked by its simplicity. God the Father, in Christ, has declared every single sinner to be not guilty of sin. He made this declaration *not* because he decided to overlook sin, but because he visited the punishment for all sin on one man, Jesus Christ, *his Son*. Think of that; our punishment (which we deserved) was piled instead upon God’s beloved Son (who certainly deserved anything but punishment). This same Prophet Isaiah put it this way: ***“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”*** (Isaiah 1:18) Our sins are “white” (we are forgiven) only because Jesus paid for them. God has declared it to be so. Heaven in ours through faith alone in Jesus Christ. This is the greatest demonstration God’s power among us.

Know then that the very Creator of heaven and earth is living, active, and powerful among us still today, working the unseen miracles of conversion and preservation every day. Rather than doubt either the existence or the power of God, thank him for the privilege of working in his service, and renew your appreciation for the power that he has placed at your disposal – his Word. Know that through that living, active, powerful Word the Creator of heaven and earth still accomplishes his holy will today. Amen.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Romans 8:12-17** So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, <sup>6</sup> but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears, let him hear." <sup>18</sup> ¶ "Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

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## ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

**BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA**

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Michael Roehl, Pastor

**The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – July 16, 2023**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

## The Opening Hymn – 11 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Safely Through Another Week"

## The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. *(Brown Hymnal)*

## The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

**The Old Testament Lesson:** (Romans 8:12-17) There is great benefit for us to be reminded often of the honor and privilege that has been given to us in that we are now *children of God*. As such we have God's own invitation to come to him at any time and for any reason. He has promised not only to hear us, but to exercise his perfect, divine wisdom in answering our prayers. But be reminded also that discipleship carries challenges as well as privilege. So also in our first lesson we are warned to expect hardship, which cannot be avoided when we live as his children ought.

## Psalm 2 (Supplement page 30) *(Brown Hymnal)*

**The New Testament Lesson:** (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23) Jesus himself here teaches us something about not only the power of our God and his Word but about man's terrible power to reject and despise that Word. This lesson will be a great personal benefit if we read and apply it not generally but personally – identifying those things in our lives that serve to "choke" from our lives the faith that God himself has established in our hearts. The Holy Spirit works through his Word not only to establish but to maintain saving faith.

## The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. *(Brown Hymnal)*

## The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 417 *(Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)*

"How Can I Thank Thee, Lord"

## The Sermon – Text: Isaiah 55:6-11 *(Printed on the back of this bulletin)*

**"Trust God's Wisdom and Power"**

## The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Post-Sermon Hymn – 764 *(Brown Hymnal)*

"God of Grace, and God of Glory"

## The Offering followed by the Prayers

## The Benediction

## The Closing Hymn - 417 *(Stanzas 5-7) (Red Hymnal)*

"How Can I Thank Thee, Lord"

## Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

## Attendance – Sunday (37) Average (43)

### This Week at St. Paul:

<b>Today</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	<b>-11:15 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
	<b>-11:30 a.m.</b>	– Church Council Meeting

**CLC News** – Missionary Peter Evensen has returned the call to Calvary of Marquette. That congregation has now called Pastor James Albrecht. Messiah of Eau Claire has called Pastor Samuel Rodebaugh. CLC General Fund offerings fell short of budgeted needs by -\$194,543 for FY23. This deficit was offset, in part, by \$93,395 in under-spending by the various boards, resulting in a net deficit of -\$101,148. The current Reserve Fund balance is \$95,555.

**Women's Retreat in Valentine** – Rides are available for anyone wishing to attend the Women's Retreat in Valentine, NE September 22-24. See Sandy Roehl for more information.

**Summer Events** – A wide variety of family events and retreats have been scheduled for this summer and fall by various groups and congregations in our Synod. See Pastor Roehl for a complete listing. Also a reminder that our **Summer VBS** is scheduled for **July 31 - August 4**, and our **Annual Church Picnic** for **August 6<sup>th</sup>**. We will also be looking for volunteers to distribute flyers prior to our VBS. See Grace Loeb for more information.

**Application for Membership** – After a course of instruction, Mr. Allen Nitschke has expressed his agreement with the teachings and practice of St Paul Lutheran Church and has applied for communicant membership.