

First Sunday in Lent
March 10, 2019

Text: Luke 4:1-13

Theme: "God Has Spoken"

We all know about speaking. We do it every day. On average how many words does an individual speak in a day? Is there a male/female difference. Why don't you Google it and find out? I already did. You'll find more than one answer. I'll share this one. It's not a representative sample of all the population. This one focused on college students in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. The sample was 210 men and 186 women. The men spoke an average of 15,669 words per day and the woman 16,215, not a big difference. Both the most verbose, about 47,000 words, and the one with the least to say, around 500, were men. It was found the women tended to talk more about people and the men more about things.

Yes, we know about speaking. And we know about writing. There has been a lot of written about speaking and a lot of spoken about writing. Authority and reliability and effectiveness gets back to the speaker and/or writer. Today we see the Authority, the One who speaks the truth, who even is the Truth, speaking to ward of the untruths of the liar. It is no less than God Himself in that encounter in the wilderness.

God has spoken. His speaking is revealed to us and for us in the Scriptures. In the beginning God was speaking. "Let there be..." and being began. If no speaking than no beginning. God then spoke of what He called into existence. He declared it to be good, even very good. God has been speaking since then. He has spoken in the Law and the Prophets. He gave the Law through Moses. Since no one was there in the beginning to see and to hear God spoke to Moses what had happened and he wrote it down. We know

about creation, the fall, the flood, the patriarchs, about judgment, promises and deliverance because God spoke those things for Moses to write. Through Moses God showed His redeemed people how to live as His people. He would bless them with what they needed to live in the land He had given to them.

Through the prophets God continued to speak. Often He called them to account for not living as His people. Through the prophets we have hard words of judgment, comforting words of forgiveness and restoration, and hopeful words about the One who will bring it all about. Malachi was the last of the writing prophets of the OT. But God was not finished speaking. In these latter days He has spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-3). The promised One arrives. God speaks of Him and to Him. He announces His birth through the angels. He speaks to Him, affirms Him at His baptism. It's right before our text for today. "You are my Son, my beloved, in You I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22) The One who comes down from heaven will speak of what He sees and knows.

God speaks. There has been much speaking about what God has spoken. It's already so in the Garden. "Did God really say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1) Actually, no, God did not say that. What He said to Adam was, "You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of God and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (2:17) It would have been really good if Eve had simply spoken these words, or if Adam had jumped in to say that. The devil has more to say about what has been said. 'God may have said that stuff about dying, but it ain't going to happen. Not only will you not die, you'll be more than you are now. You will be godlike!'

The evil continues to raise doubt about God has spoken. He does it for 40 years in the wilderness, a temptation to which Israel often succumbed. Actually in only the first year or so Israel put God to the test 10 times (Numbers 14:22) Today we see Israel being tempted again, Israel in One in Jesus, being tempted for 40 days in the wilderness. The evil one tempts Jesus by speaking to what God has spoken. ‘Of course you are hunger, you can fix it, that is, if you are a Son of God.’ The Father has just spoken those wonderful words to Jesus at His baptism. The devil is trying to raise doubt. Then to the mountain. ‘Power and glory, now would that not be nice, think of what good you could do. I can give it to you. Think of how much better it would be for people to live under you, a son of god, instead of under me, the evil one.’ Then finally to the Temple. ‘Take a leap, impress the crowd. All will see how much god cares for this son. Look, god’s promises for rescue are written right here! How can you argue with this?’

Now we are in the 40 days of Lent. The devil still has a lot to say about God’s speaking. ‘God wants you to have more. Work yourself to exhaustion, don’t give so generously. You can never have too much.’ ‘Engage in evil to put yourself in a position to do good.’ ‘Don’t worry about this sin business. Just go forth with boldness and let god clean up the mess.’

How do we answer? Human words may be eloquent or not, but they will fall short. Words are spoken to interpret God’s Word, to reshape it, to make it more reasonable or more current. Did Eve think she had to reframe God’s Word in some way? Reframing does not ward off no matter how sharp the mind of the speaker; it only opens a gap for the tempter. ‘God made just the way you are.’ Sin can’t really be sin, how could it be if God made you such. ‘God wants you to be happy most of all. Get out of that unhappy

marriage.’ This is a push pin approach. There may be many pins and a lot of different colors, but trying to ward off the devil that way we end up as the pin cushion.

Do we forget God has spoken? Jesus testified to the validity and current nature of that speaking, says He came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). He doesn’t mess around with pin cushions when attacked by the devil. He answer with God’s Word. Actually, the only words recorded for us by Luke in this account from Jesus’ mouth are quotations from Scripture, all Deuteronomy. He doesn’t try to explain them or reframe them, just speaks them. He came not to debate the devil but to defeat him. When the devil tries his own use of “it is written,” Jesus trumps Him with “it is said.” ‘Yes, it is written, but what has been written is what has been said. God spoke the words they wrote. I know, I was there, even speaking.’ No push pins for Jesus. He nails it. The devil has no answer. He leaves but will come back when he thinks he has a better opportunity for success.

The Son does fulfill the law and the prophets. He does walk perfectly by God’s law and He fulfills what has been written of Him. Through all the temptations of the opportunist devil be they through foes are friends, He remains faithful, perfect, sinless. He will go to Jerusalem and there will a spectacle for all to see, but it will not be a high dive from the Temple. No, it will be the gruesome sight of a man on a cross, an innocent man on a cross, the very Son of God nailed to that cross.

He will finish His work, but it will not be the victory the devil thought. Yes, the Son of God would die and the devil delights. But it’s his defeat. Jesus has died, but it’s the accusations of the devil that are dead. All the written code of the law that stood against was nailed to the cross, taken by Jesus. Jesus shows the devil death is now nothing to be feared. It’s not R.I.P for Jesus, now He rips the cords of death to shreds.

There is victory speech. God speaks words of His victory to us. Salvation is accomplished. We have God's Word on it. We don't have to go search high or low for it. But it has been brought to us. It's not ours to adjust or update or edit, but to believe. God's Word tells us, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13 from Joel 2:32). We are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26). Those baptized into Christ are clothed in Him. The Spirit is poured out to give faith, sin is washed away. We are raised life in Him, raised to live, to rejoice, to serve, to reign.

We have deliverance from the attacks of the devil. There is no need to be pin cushions or waves tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We have the sword of the Spirit. We have the Word that convicts and convinces us. It slays and then makes alive. We have the whole armor of God to weather the attacks of the devil. We don't face the roaring lion alone. We resist him firm in the faith. The God of all grace does restore, affirm, strengthen, and establish (1 Peter 5:10). We have His word on it.

We walk after our Lord serving as He did. We walk and serve in the light to bring more out of the darkness. We can speak many words, but only God's Word will slay and make alive. We have our stories, and it's okay to share them, people can relate. But it's only Jesus' story that saves. We know it, believe it, and speak it. God does the work. So He has spoken. For Jesus' sake. Amen