

I have been told by some farmers that our crops in Southern Minnesota desperately need something right now to continue to grow and become healthy. No one questions that they are crops, but we are concerned that they need water, a constant shower and watering. God grant rain for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The apostle Peter tells us that Christians in Asia Minor and Southern Minnesota desperately need something right now to continue to grow and be healthy. No one questions that you are Christians living in world filled with the drought of sin, but Peter is concerned that you need the word of God, the Bible, a constant shower and watering. God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Jesus lived a perfect life for us as our substitute and then gave up his life to pay the penalty of our sin and bring us forgiveness and eternal life. As his disciples we live a **God-lived life** since Jesus lived his life for us, gave up his life for us and has given us new life. In this our first of four services focusing on a **God-lived life** the Apostle Peter tells us that:

**You have been given a God-Lived life.**

**1. The word has given you new life.**

**2. Your new God-lived Life craves the Word.**

*“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, “All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”*

**1. The Word has given you new life.**

Farmers around here seem to know just when to plant. They keep their eye on the sky, the soil, the conditions, and when it is the right time, they move, and they don't stop. The people who love them bring them food. Old retired farmers (who never really retire) are enlisted to ride through the fields preparing them, or planting. Everyone is involved sometimes working around the clock. And the seed is planted in the field. By God's amazing creative power the seed takes root. And soon you see little green sprouts in the field. And they grow and get big!

God made all the preparations, knew the right time and conditions. He planted faith in your heart. For some of you it was through water and the Word at your baptism, for some it was when the Word was proclaimed to you - Law revealing and condemning your sin and sinfulness, and Gospel showing you your Savior. God sent people into your life to teach you his Word, watering the plant of your faith with the Gospel, fertilizing it through crosses God asks you to bear which drive you back to his Word and his Grace. By God's grace the plant of faith has taken root, sprouts and gets big. That's who you are – God's child. It's what he's made you through his Word. *“You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”*

This **new God-lived life** sprouts and shows itself in genuine love. *“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart.”* The Holy Spirit has given you a new heart of faith that is different from the world. You seek to do good to your neighbor, to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Think more of them than yourself. It is countercultural. It is not a hypocritical love that is nice to someone so that you can get what you want. It is a sincere love. Peter uses two different words for love – a brotherly/sisterly love *philadelphia* - that is based on commonality and being in the same family. And *agape* love is used – the love used to describe God's love for us – a self-sacrificing love that acts for the good of the one loved whether they deserve it or not. **The word has given you new life** and it shows itself. This word is powerful and effective for us and for others. The seed is planted. The plant is growing. What does it need?

**2. Your new God-Lived Life craves the Word.**

Peter quotes Isaiah, *“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.”* God's Word, the Bible, is powerful enough that the Holy Spirit uses it to change hearts from dead stone to living, beating, freed

and forgiven hearts. *This is the Word that was preached to you.* He showers you with God's word to make you crave the word that gives life and grows you.

But your sinful nature seeks to distract you and give you self-serving substitutes which fade away. That's why the writer to the Hebrews warns you to *"not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:25). It's a battle to crave the right things, isn't it?

We have the very Words of God meant for us, but too often we tell ourselves, "I already know that," or "I was confirmed, so I know enough." And we leave the Bible sit on the shelf, or when we look on our phone for most used apps, our Bible app is not near the top. It's like a newlywed bride who says she doesn't need to hear her husband tell her she loves her. "He told me once, I don't need to hear it again." That's ridiculous. It's like a doctor who graduates medical school and thinks that for the next forty years they can rest on what they've learned and never learn new technology or medicine. That's dangerous! It's just as foolish for us to neglect God's word in our lives.

We spend put in extra hours at work or contently binge-watch a screen or fill our schedules with the next thing that will give us a sense of pleasure or fulfillment, but to pause and take time for God's Word for ourselves or our families seems much too difficult. Bible Class numbers dwindle even though they are offered in person, and even put online. Church attendance wanes. The temptation is there for the faithful to be a Pharisee making it more about a God-looking life than a God-lived life. And we check the box, but our heart is not in it as we tune out because we feel it is boring or not as exciting as last time, or we have so many other things to get to and think about.

You and I have a sinful nature in us that continually wants us to ignore the Word. But you are not your sinful nature. Peter told the believers they had been bought at a high price, *"with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."* They were *"born again... of imperishable seed through the living and enduring Word of God."* God forgive us for this lackadaisical attitude to the powerful and effective Word he showers so generously on us. God forgive us for thinking we are too busy for the *one thing needful* that gives life and contentment. God forgive us for being so petty and short-sighted as to not spend time with Jesus.

And he does. He has forgiven us for Jesus' sake. Jesus lived the life you have neglected. He was in the temple as a 12-year-old engaged and asking questions, learning at the feet of people who were not perfect, even though he was. He took time away from the crowds to speak to his Father and pray, sometimes even going late into the watches of the night. For himself – sure, but also for you as your substitute. And then because not only do you need a perfect life to get into heaven, you also need to be guiltless, Jesus suffered on the cross for you, as your substitute, so that nothing will separate you from the love of God. *"God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God."* That's why he did it – for you. You are forgiven and clothed with Christ's righteousness.

And as we live our God-lived life as disciples, we crave the Word. Peter tells us, *"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."* Rid yourselves of the self-serving substitutes of deceit and malice looking out for self. Stop envying others and think of how you can serve others. Stop tearing others down with slander. Instead seek how you can build them up whether they deserve it or not. How can we do this? We don't have the strength in ourselves! But God does. He has made you something different. You are born again through the powerful Word he has given you. He fills your craving with his enduring Word.

In a little while you'll get the opportunity during our *Stewardship Thought* to think about how you can connect to God's Word. Look at how you can grow in hearing the Word and spending time with your Savior. He will grow you through it. It's who you are as his disciple.

Dads know the panic of trying to get the bottle ready while your infant is hollering. You have to warm the bottle up, but not too much. You have the extra steps to put in the right amount of formula, and then make sure you shake it well so it doesn't clog up the nipple of the bottle. But then you give that hollering baby the bottle and they calm down. They suck and suck and suck, barely coming up for air. They were so hungry, but being fed with that nourishing formula, they are at peace, and ready for a nap, or to meet the day and play or do tummy time, or just be contented being held.

You know your Lord's goodness – the forgiveness he's won for you, the mercy he pours out daily for you so you with a clear conscience can go to serve your neighbor and love from the heart. Crave his powerful and enduring Word – in personal study, in worship, in bible class. You will find your Savior. You will find contentment. You will find strength to serve and to bear crosses and be joyful in the **God-lived life** he's given you. Amen.