

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Word of the Lord came to the Prophet Isaiah and said “My Word that goes forth from My mouth shall not return void.” The Word of God is living and active, the Apostle writes. God the Son is the perfect expression of the will of the Father.

And that will, the good and gracious will of God, the expression of His mercy and love in time and space, is that His Word will accomplish what He pleases, and Prosper in the things for which He sent Him. So the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us.

The Word that spoke to Isaiah was there, in that upper room, with the Twelve, as St. John records. His 33 years of Incarnate earthly life would soon end. He knew that cross and tomb awaited Him. So He spoke no longer in parables.

The Seed of the Woman, the Arm of the Lord, the God of Abraham, the Son of David, the God who dwelt between the cherubim, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Good Shepherd, taught the Twelve “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.” His Words were stark and clear.

He came from the Father. But His Way back to the Father was the Way of Suffering. He would wet the streets of Jerusalem with His Blood. He would bear His cross. The spikes would find their sinless, sin-covered marks. In His last hours He would pray and bless, He would and teach and die. Darkness would cover the land. And in that darkness the Light of the World would finish the work prophesied of Old.

As He promised through the Prophet, He accomplished that which pleased the Father. That was the Way to the Father. But the Word promised that the Word would not return void. So He left the tomb void. He robbed death of its Divine Hostage. He took up His life again. He prospered in thing for which He was sent – to defeat sin, to conquer death, to crush the ancient serpent. He prospered in the thing for which He was sent - your redemption, the redemption of all men. His Way back to the Father opened your way to the Father.

As He promised, the Word does not return void. The Prophetic and Apostolic Divine Word, the Word which finds its center and fulfillment in Christ, is publicly proclaimed and preached to the ends of the earth. And by the power of the Spirit, that Word accomplishes that which pleases God. It accomplishes God’s will in you.

The Divine Word is living and active. The sharp edge of the Law cuts and slices through your self-justification and your excuses. Its piercing point digs into your rationalizations and your pretexts, and exposes your sin. So the Apostle directs you not to deceive yourself.

The tree is judged by its fruit. So be not hearers only, be doers of the Word. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. So to read and hear the Word without changing your life is a useless religion. Hearing works faith. Faith alone saves. But faith is never alone. Faith is not idle. Faith works.

Consider your own life – have you, as the Apostle demands, kept yourself unspotted from the world? That is God’s will for you. Or have you been stained by the corruption and insanity of the sinful, fallen world around you? Has the perverse reasoning of this world been your teacher?

Have you thought, lived, spoken and acted like those who have no God? Like all fallen men, you have not bridled your tongue. And you have deceived your heart. Repent. Look into the mirror of the perfect law of God, and see there what kind of man you have been. Look into the mirror of God's perfect Law, and see there the just penalty for your sin.

But God's thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are His ways your ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts. And thanks be to God for that. For in His mercy, in His grace, He gives you another Word, a Word not of bondage but of liberty.

That Word too does not return to Him void, that Word too, that glorious Gospel Word, that Word of life and forgiveness and love, accomplishes what He pleases, and prospers in the thing for which He sent it. It brings Christ to you. And that Word is the Word that brings you comfort, consolation and hope and faith. That Word is that Christ died for you, in your place, to render the debt you have owed to God, to settle your account, to pay your price, to redeem you, to buy you back, to make you God's own, to open to you the Way to the Father He Himself opened.

So you look into that perfect Law of liberty, the Gospel Word, and by the power of the Spirit of the Living God you continue in that Saving Word, and you are blessed in what you do. You believe. But more specifically you believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, the only Savior, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, by Whose Blood you are redeemed. And that, dear Christian, is the pure and undefiled religion before God the Father.

That faith impels you, by the Spirit's leading, to do the very things God has prepared for you to do. For the Apostle writes of you that you "are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." So in Christ, led by His Spirit, empowered by faith and hope and love, you produce good fruits, fruits which outwardly show the faith God has placed in you. You have received the implanted Word which is able to save your soul.

It is yours, dear Christian, to live in the day that your Lord promised. For it is in this day, today, the day of salvation, that you ask the Father, by the Spirit, in Christ's Name, and the Father hears and answers. The Father Himself loves you because you love His Only-begotten Son, and you believe that He came forth from God. So you pray. You pray trusting that God hears you, as He has promised. You pray because that's what faith does.

You pray "forgive us our trespasses", and God the Son places His Body and Blood into your mouth. He who is the Sower and the Seed gives heavenly bread to you, His redeemed eater. The Word that has gone forth from the Father places Himself into you, and He accomplishes what He pleases, He prospers in the thing for which He sent Him, that you return to the Lord, that He has mercy on you, for it is He who abundantly pardons.

He bids you "Take and eat", "Take and drink", and you receive Christ, not a hearer only, but a doer of His Word, for the forgiveness of your sins, and for the strengthening of your faith. And the Way to the Father, the Way to the Triune God, the Way to heaven, is opened to you.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.