

Last week Molly and I spent several days in the Nashville area of Tennessee. How did it go? Well it was pretty terrible, we didn't get to come to church at Resurrection on Thursday night. But the trip wasn't a total loss. I get to tell you about all the things we saw and did. It may surprise you, but it isn't all distilleries and country music, it's full of history too. We went to several Civil War battlefields and saw enough cannons and guns and swords for a lifetime. I have seen these things before, but one sword in particular surprised me. It was a short little sword, maybe one and a half-feet long. It didn't look like it could do much, but when I read the description it said, "This double edged sword could hamstring and take down a war horse in one strike." Wow! This tiny little sword could cut through a lot because it was sharp on both sides. A two-edged sword pierces deeply. Today's text says the Word is even sharper than a two-edged sword. The Word has two powerful sides to it, when the Word sees us it pierces through to the heart and sees everything and exposes our sin. But then the Word comes and shows us Jesus, just when we need to see him. It's time to build: hold on to the Word!

When you look at swords in a museum you realize they aren't going to be seeing much action anymore. Swords on display are there to look at, gather dust, and make you wonder what heroic deeds and dramatic action they once took part in. That is not the case for the double edged sword of God's Word. The sword of the word isn't dead and stale, but is itself living and active.

Because the Word is a living Word it means it is relevant for us. The Word is unlike any other book ever written. When God inspired the various authors to write his word down, God purposefully had them record eternal truths about himself for all generations to learn and grow from. God did not allow his servants to write any false information. God cannot lie and his Word cannot lie. Whether it is the history of the beginnings of the earth, or the history of a nation of people, poetry praising God for being who he is, or straightforward instructions on how to live, the Word always is true.

The is unlike any other book because it does not lose importance over time. Scientific studies, medical reports, and history textbooks are constantly being revised. The Word is not like some news article that tells people what they need to know one day, and a year later doesn't matter. The Word was written down thousands of years ago, but will continue to be just as important thousands of years in the future as it was when it was first written. That isn't normal. It isn't normal for lives of obscure nomads, kings, and fishermen to be part of a life-changing story. The huge difference between the Bible and all other books is that it is alive and active.

The Word is living because it is the tool that God uses to tell the World about himself and his love. The Word is living because it is always at work to accomplish what God wants. What does God say? God says he wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth! God does not make his truth something hard to find, or some hidden mystery that takes years of study to unravel. Clearly and plainly, you will see his promises of love and mercy throughout his Word.

But if God's will is to love and save people, why does he call his Word sharper than a double-edged sword that pierces everything? As the living Word works to accomplish God's will to bring you to the knowledge of the truth, it will actively look at every part of you and know you completely. The Holy Spirit and the Word will see you as you really are. Our text says "[the Word] penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Wow, nothing is hidden is hidden from God. The Word can tell what is between your soul and your very life. It knows what is going on in your body, it even knows what you are thinking and what your attitude is right now. And it isn't just you that God sees, he is omniscient, he sees and knows everything everywhere... I know it's great for someone to understand what you are thinking or feeling, but would you want anyone to know every thought or feeling you have, especially the feelings you have toward them? And it isn't just anyone you knows everthing you think or do, it's God, the one, as our text says, "to whom we must give account."

The one person we want to have see us at our best sees us at our worst. Yes God sees your doubts in him. He sees your frustration with his plans, He sees you fail to forgive others even when he has forgiven you, He sees you return to your favorite sins like a dog returns to his own vomit. That two edged-sword cuts us to the heart. The Holy Spirit uses his living Word to expose our own weakness, faults and sin to ourselves. It would be a terrible thing if that's all the Word does, but thankfully, it is God's will that we are all saved from our sins that he sees so clearly. He uses his sword to pierce our diseased hearts so he can directly apply the cure of Jesus.

Our text today doesn't end by telling us we are doomed because God sees our sin and will hold us accountable, but it continues by showing us our great high priest Jesus. Maybe that phrase, "Our great high priest" doesn't mean much to you, but I want to make sure we all understand what a wonderful and loving phrase that is. It's probably a good idea to review what a High Priest in the Old Testament did. A Priest was a man who was selected as a go-between. The priest was supposed represent the people to God and in return, represent God to the people. A priest did this by offering animal sacrifices to please God and to follow his commands. It was up to the priest to offer prayers to God and then offer forgiveness to the people. That was the job of the priest. It was always meant to represent what Jesus would come to do, and when Jesus did come he took upon himself the role of our Great High Priest.

Jesus is our go-between to God the Father. He is the one who intercedes for us and prays for us. He is the one who offered a sacrifice for us, but unlike the priests of the past, Jesus offered himself, once for all. No more countless animals sacrifices that didn't save anyone. Jesus paid the price for the whole world's sins, so that when we have to give an account to God for everything we have ever thought, said or done, that piercing sword will only see the results of the forgiveness of our sins, and Jesus' righteousness living in our hearts through faith. It's time to build; it's time to hold to the Word, because although it sees your sin, it shows you Jesus through the faith that the Word gives you.

When we first hear about God's Word being sharper than a two-edged sword, it makes us uncertain and afraid! The living Word exposes our hearts and minds to God's judgement. But we see that the living Word comes to us to bring us Jesus our Great High Priest. We don't have to be afraid anymore, but can be happy to have the living Word. We can be happy because our Great High Priest is still doing his job for us. He still represents us in heaven and he's the best there is for the job.

Our text reminds us that Jesus knows about your suffering and that he himself knows what it is like! Jesus knows what it is like to get sick, to be disappointed and betrayed by friends and family, and to suffer immense physical pain. We are reminded that Jesus knows what it is like to be tempted too. He knows the struggles we all go through, but thankfully he didn't give in to his temptations. He remained without sin to be the perfect sacrifice that no other high priest could give. Jesus promises to be there for you forever.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Amen.