

—2 Chronicles 32:1-2, 14-21, 29-33

<sup>1</sup>Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. <sup>2</sup>He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. <sup>14</sup>While they were bringing out the money that had been taken into the temple of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord that had been given through Moses. <sup>15</sup>Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord." He gave it to Shaphan. <sup>16</sup>Then Shaphan took the book to the king and reported to him: "Your officials are doing everything that has been committed to them. <sup>17</sup>They have paid out the money that was in the temple of the Lord and have entrusted it to the supervisors and workers." <sup>18</sup>Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. <sup>19</sup>When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes. <sup>20</sup>He gave these orders to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant: <sup>21</sup>"Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book." <sup>29</sup>Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup>He went up to the temple of the Lord with the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites- all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. <sup>31</sup>The king stood by his pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord -to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book. <sup>32</sup>Then he had everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin pledge themselves to it; the people of Jerusalem did this in accordance with the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. <sup>33</sup>Josiah removed all the detestable idols from all the territory belonging to the Israelites, and he had all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God. As long as he lived, they did not fail to follow the Lord, the God of their fathers.

Today, we have the collision of two events which lead us to think about our lives as disciples. These are the beginning of our God-lived life stewardship series and the installations of two new teachers, Mrs. Severeid and Mrs. Pufahl, a new principal, Mr. Kiecker, and a worship director, Mr. Bode. These men and women are wonderful blessings from God to our congregation and school. They are here to walk alongside us in a God-lived life. Our teachers and principal are called to instruct the children in their lives as disciples. Mr. Bode is called to coordinate the music through which we are taught. These men and women are blessings from God in our God-lived life.

While they are blessings from God, they also demonstrate something about this church. The fact that Emmanuel Lutheran Church and School called them to serve at this congregation and community demonstrates that **we value God's Word**.

In a God-lived life, **we value God's Word**. There is a clear reason that we do so. This is because of what it does. God's Word is powerful. God's Word has the power to kill and make alive. **This causes us to value God's Word**.

In this sermon, we look at a fascinating account from the period of the Divided Kingdom. This was a time of many issues for them. As a nation, they turned their backs on God. Therefore, as God foretold through Amos, they lost His Word. It is written in Amos, "*The days are coming,' declares the Sovereign Lord, 'when I will send a famine through the land- not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord.'*" (Amos 8:11) During this famine of the Word, God caused to rise a good king. He was a king in line with David. His name was Josiah. God used Josiah to bring His Word to the people of Judah.

Josiah did some great things. He enacted reforms to do away with idolatry in Judah. He destroyed altars throughout the land. Along with this purification, Josiah sent people to repair the Lord's temple. During this temple building project, Hilkiah, the priest, and Shaphan, the scribe, found "the Book of the Law." They found the Word of God as recorded by Moses. Some guess that they had found just Deuteronomy. Others say that they found the first five books of the Bible. They found the powerful Word of God. In this account, we see the power of God's Word when Shaphan read to Josiah. When he heard the Word of God read, he tore his robe. Josiah was convicted by this Word. He recognized that he and his land were not living according to the Lord's commands. To understand the rest of Josiah's actions, we need to understand where sanctified living comes from. Sanctified living is motivated by the gospel. When one knows that they are forgiven, that God has promised salvation in Christ, they desire to live in accordance with God's commands. The reading of "the Book of the Law" affected Josiah. God's Word convicted him of sin. God's Word promised him eternal life.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Sure, we see that God's Word convicts people of sin here. But Pastor, where does it say that Josiah heard the promises of God?" Well, we see that Josiah had all the words of "the Book of the Law" read. We also see his reaction, which is understood as someone who had true gospel motivation. To better understand this, we should talk about what is meant by Law. The Hebrew word, "Torah," here translated as Law can be understood in different ways depending on the context. It can be law like the commandments of God. It can also be used to speak about God's recorded Word. The latter is the more likely here. Hilkiah and Shaphan found God's recorded Word. God's Word has statements of law and gospel. Later in this text, it also speaks about the people hearing the "Book of the Covenant." This was the one-way covenant of God's promise. The covenant in which God did it all. God's Word has statements that convict and statements that promise. God's Word kills and makes alive.

Looking to portions of Deuteronomy, we can demonstrate **the power of God's Word**, the power to kill and make alive. In Deuteronomy, Moses reminds Israel of the commandments that God gave them on Mount Sinai. There Moses repeats the ten commandments. Upon hearing these words, Josiah would be convicted of sin. There is also the gospel in Deuteronomy. Here is just one example, "*For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.*" (Deuteronomy 4:31) The covenant with their forefathers was the promise of the seed. This was the promise of the Savior. If this is what Josiah heard, he heard words of God's promise. In reading Deuteronomy or any portion of the Pentateuch, Josiah would be convicted of sin. He would then hear the promises of God's grace, which is fulfilled in Jesus. That is why Josiah **valued God's Word**. He valued God's Word because it is powerful.

God's powerful Word is His law and gospel. God's Word has commandments which convict and statements of promise. **We value God's Word** because of what it is. God's Word is the valuable truth that shows people that they need a Savior. Then it proclaims to them who that Savior is. Do you truly and properly value God's Word? Do you value God's Word when it convicts you? When you hear that you are a sinner. When you hear that what you have done is an abomination in God's sight. When it tells you that "*the wages of your sin is death,*" (Romans 6:23) do you value it? How about God's Word of promise? Do you value it when God's Word offers forgiveness to horrible people? When God's Word promises eternal life to people you think don't deserve it? Do you value it then? Part of valuing God's Word for its power, is appreciating what it has the power to do. God's Word has the power to convict you of your sins. God's Word has the power to give life. God's Word has statements that do each. God's Word has law and gospel. Do you always value God's Word for its power?

Imagine the following scenario. Your neighbor, who is not a Christian, has a little baby girl. Her name is Lila. Lila is just about the cutest baby you have ever seen. She laughs. She does not cry much. Lila is the perfect baby in every way, but she is not baptized. According to God's Word, which says, "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23) and "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23), Lila, that cute little baby girl, is a sinner. She deserves condemnation. Do you value God's Word when it says something like that? Do you value God's Word when it convicts and condemns little baby girls?

Or, think of a prisoner named Rex. Rex is a rough guy. Humanly speaking, Rex has no redeemable qualities. He is rude. He is mean. No one even likes Rex at the prison. Now, Rex is in prison because he deserves it. Rex is a murderer. According to God's Word, Jesus died for Rex. Despite what Rex has done, God's Word proclaims that he can go to heaven. God's Word says, "*for God so loved the world that He sent his only Son, that whoever believes in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16) God's Word says that a guy like Rex can go to heaven. Also, Rex doesn't even have to do anything. It says that the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace to create faith in His heart. God's Word says that he is saved apart from his actions. Do you value God's Word when it promises eternal life in heaven to murders?

Do you value the power of God's Word when it convicts and condemns babies, but offers forgiveness and life to murderers? I bet you feel uncomfortable with that. There are several issues that lead us to feel uncomfortable about the power of God's Word. Most importantly, it is the sinful nature that remains inside of you. That sinful nature that is opposed to God's law and gospel. Failing to properly value God's Word is sin. Failing to properly value the law and gospel is sin. God's Word powerfully convicts sin. You already heard what the wages of sin is.

Yet, you know that the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus your Lord. Remember, God's Word is powerful because it proclaims Christ. Through this Word, the Holy Spirit gives you life. In God's Word you hear that your sins are forgiven. You are even forgiven for not properly valuing His Word. God's Word proclaims what He has done to save you. He sent His Son for you. Jesus lived for you. Jesus died on the cross for you. Jesus rose from the grave triumphantly. The gospel is powerful. In hearing the gospel, the Holy Spirit creates faith in your heart. He brings you to a right relationship with your Heavenly Father. God's Word gives you eternal life.

Then, when the gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit works in you. He works in you the will and ability to follow the commands of God. Then, you can look at God's law as a guide. You see it as a guide in your Christian living. When you do this, you can show others that you value God's Word. You show them with your actions. This is

much like the reforms that Josiah instituted in Judah. Showing other people their thankfulness for God's promise and that they valued God's Word, they followed His commands. Now, you get to do this.

We get to show that we value God's Word with our actions. Motivated by the gospel, we strive to honor God with what we do. A major way that we can demonstrate this is through our lives as disciples. This Sunday, we all received a tool to do so. We got these challenge cards. They are challenges in the life of being a disciple. They are challenges to create a new routine in our use of God's Word. Now, they are not challenges you have to do. Accepting these challenges will not gain you more favor. But these are ways that you can demonstrate with your actions that you value God's Word. More importantly, these are ways to get into contact with the powerful Word of God.

Today, **we show that we value God's Word**. We get to install four servants of the gospel. To them, let me give some encouragement. Mrs. Pufahl, Mrs. Severeid, Mr. Kiecker, and Mr. Bode, God's Word is powerful. As you have been called to serve these saints share it with them. Walk with them in their God-lived life. Just as importantly, engage yourself in the study of God's Word. God's Word is the power of your Lord. God's Word proclaims salvation in Jesus to you. Amen.