

Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 24)

Text: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 (NIV)

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. ¹In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ²Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Theme: The Bible, a Roadmap to Heaven

There was a time when we used maps. They were wonderful things. They almost seemed to be infallible. They never showed streets that were not there or took you in strange ways. They always seemed to be able to get you to where you wanted to go, as long as you read them correctly.

Today we use navigators, but they don't seem to be as reliable. In fact, I often second guess the navigator in my car, and many times I am right. One day while driving through Chicago, it told us to get off of the freeway and take the city streets. A group of professors from the St. Louis seminary were directed to come to Benediction by taking Interstate 43 to downtown from Hales Corners and then to take Fond du Lac Ave to Benediction. Last month when I was visiting my brother-in-law, their navigator told them to get off of the paved road and take a gravel road for 5 miles because it was slightly shorter.

While the Bible is more like a reliable roadmap, it is tempting to use it like a navigator. There are times when we trust it, but other times when we think that we know better. However, the Bible is the sure roadmap, that will lead us to heaven.

I. The Bible is inspired by God.

In verse 16 Paul writes that all Scripture is God-breathed. The traditional word for this is “inspired.” God gave the prophets and apostles the words to write.

There are a lot of religions that make this claim. The Muslims believe that the Quran was verbally revealed to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years. Many of them believe that they must ceremonially wash their hands before they touch a copy. Non--muslims are not allowed to touch a copy or interpret the Quran. Nothing is to be placed on top of it, and it is never to be placed on the floor or in a bathroom. Mormons believe that in 1827 the angel Moroni showed Joseph Smith golden plates, which were buried in New York State. They contained stories of the 10 lost Jewish tribes and how they emigrated to America before dying out. Today there are many people

who believe that the Holy Spirit inspired them to make pronouncements that others should believe, which are often at odds with what the Bible says. As Christians we don't believe that these works are truly inspired by God.

A lot of people also doubt that the Bible is inspired by God. They doubt that things that the Bible says can really be true. In the 1800's many people doubted the history of the Old Testament. For instance, it was stated that there was no city of Ur, where Abraham came from, and that the Bible made up the Hittites. However, later in that century, Ur was found, and a large Hittite library was found by archeologists. Over and over again, it has been shown that when the history of the Bible was questioned, the Bible was right. Today people question all kinds of things like the 6 day creation, the flood, and the story of Jonah, but could any of these things be too hard for the God who rescued His people from slavery in Egypt and captivity in Babylon, who raised Jesus from the dead, and delivered His people from all the power of the Roman empire? There is indeed a lot of evidence that the stories are at least "plausible," more plausible than that the world began randomly.

People are especially tempted to doubt the Bible when it says things that we disagree with. It strikes at sins that we all struggle with: lying, cheating, gossiping, quarreling, greed or dishonoring our parents and other authorities. When we hear those things that we struggle with, we are tempted to give excuses or say that they are not so bad. It strikes at all kinds of sins that our society today says are no longer wrong. It is tempting to have itching ears that tell us what we want to hear, that the Bible is outdated, that we are an exception to the rule. We want to be told that we are good people. When the Bible calls us sinners, none of us likes that.

But the Bible is a different kind of book. Here are a couple of differences from the books that I cited earlier. The Quran has abrogated verses. There were times when Mohammed said things that clearly contradicted something that he said earlier. He said that the later writing abrogates the earlier. In contrast, the entire Bible is in agreement. There is no need to abrogate anything in the Bible. With regard to the Book of Mormon there is not a shred of evidence to show that Jews were ever in North America 600 years before Christ was born. Even though the Mormon prophets claim inspiration, the pronouncements of previous prophets have often been revoked. In contrast, there is plentiful archeological evidence that the Bible is true.

Just the way that the Bible was put together is a miracle. It was written by about 36 men over a period of 1500 years. These men had different personalities and backgrounds, and they lived in very different times. They had different issues. Yet, the entire Bible agrees. In his book, *The Word of the Lord Grows*, Martin Franzmann writes, **"The story of the Book of Mormon is a good example of how man things a sacred book should come to man— miraculously, guaranteed by its miraculousness. The canon is a miracle indeed, but a miracle of another sort, a miracle like the incarnation of our Lord, a miracle in servant's form. Only a God who is really Lord of all history could risk bringing His written word into history in the way in which the New Testament was actually brought in."**¹ The Bible is holy, but it is also came to us in a very humble way, just as our Savior did.

¹*The Word of the Lord Grows*, page 294

II. It's purpose is to bring us to faith in Christ.

Paul writes that the Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation.

They do that because they teach us something about ourselves. They teach us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. They teach us not to excuse, deny or justify our sins, but to confess them. They teach us to be humble and to reflect on our own lives before we judge others.

They especially point us to Jesus as our Savior. Right after Adam and Eve sinned, God promised them a Savior. Throughout the Old Testament the anticipation grows as more prophecies of that Savior are given. Then the New Testament tells us the Good News that unto us a Savior is born who is Christ the Lord. It shows how He paid for all of our sins on the cross of Calvary. He rose from the dead as our Savior. It invites us to confess our sins and trust in God's full and free forgiveness through Jesus Christ. It says that salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven, given to men, by which we must be saved. That is the good news of the Bible. Through faith in Christ, we must be saved. Through Him we know that our sins are forgiven. Through Him God is our dear Father, and nothing can separate us from His love. As He rose from the dead, so we can be sure that we will rise to everlasting life.

It is so important that what we hear is based on the Bible. There are 8 times in these pastoral epistles of Paul, when he writes about the importance of sound doctrine. False doctrine weakens, and even destroys faith. Sound doctrine, grounded in the Bible, builds our lives on the cornerstone of Christ. It grows our faith that He is my Savior, our love for each other, and our hope in every situation.

The Bible is like that sure old fashioned map, that never fails us. It shows us the way to salvation. It points us to Christ as our Savior. May that word burn in each of our hearts, that we may know the love of Christ, who has come to save us.

Amen.

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