

When God speaks good things happen.

That Genesis account that was read just a few minutes ago proves that over and over and over again.

Day one: God spoke and **light** appeared in the darkness. Now I know that in our modern age doing some simple act to bring light to a dark place doesn't seem all that extra-ordinary – every day we walk into dark rooms, flick a switch, and “let there be light.” But think for just a minute about how long it took humanity to get to this point of flipping a switch to bring light to a dark place – how much of an investment of time, money, and energy it took some of the smartest minds in history to figure out how electricity worked and how to harness it and how to get it into our homes. But God simply spoke and light happened.

Day two: God spoke and he created the **sky** – the atmosphere. Think about how much time and money and energy our world and its smartest minds have and are putting into understanding and preserving and maintaining our atmosphere. Regardless of how you feel about climate change, there is no denying that the earth's atmosphere is an amazingly complex thing – perfectly fine-tuned to allow life to thrive on this planet. And God simply spoke, and it was so, and he called it *sky*.

Day three: God spoke and made **oceans, lakes, and rivers**. God spoke and **continents and islands appeared**. Human beings can create islands and lakes. Human beings can attempt to hold the waters in place with dams and levies, but think of all the time and money and energy it takes to do that, and how all it takes is one storm named Sandy or Katrina to prove how little control we have over the waters of this world. God simply spoke and it was so. The waters obeyed and he called the dry ground *land*. God spoke and it was good.

God continues on day three: God spoke and **nature burst forth** in all its glorious array. Oaks and maples and birch. Roses and lilies and tulips. Apples and oranges and cherries. Think about all it takes to create and maintain just a small garden. Think about all the time and money and energy we humans have invested in understanding and experimenting and producing just one genetically modified plant. God simply spoke and it was so. God spoke and it was good.

Day four: God spoke and instantly the heavens were filled. The planets were thrown into place. The earth started spinning around the sun at the perfect distance and angle to allow life to thrive. The moon took its position in the heavens giving light to the night, driving the tides, marking the passage of time. Think of all the time and money and energy spent exploring space, and God simply spoke and it was so. God spoke and it was good.

Day five: God spoke and the water and sky he created filled with living creatures. **Fish and birds** of incredible variety sprang from nothing when God spoke. For thousands of years we humans have been studying the fish and the fowl

and we are *still* discovering the new and amazing. God simply spoke and it was so. God spoke and it was good.

Day six: God spoke and **the land he created was filled with living creatures**. From the smallest insect to the biggest mammal God spoke and there they were. Think of all the time and money and energy spent just to catalogue, let alone understand and appreciate all that moves along the ground according to their kinds. God simply spoke and it was so. God spoke and it was good.

And then on day six God spoke and made this – me, you, human beings. Our three-in-one, Triune God (that illogical mystery of the Bible where God is revealed as only one God but three distinct persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) – our Triune God reveals to us this little conversation he has among the three persons – “**Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.**” God spoke and mankind was created, male and female, we were created. Think about all the time and money and energy mankind has spent on understanding the amazing intricacies of this (the human body), and after thousands of years of study by some of the smartest humans to live and trillions of dollars spent we *still* don't understand a whole host of things about the human body. And God simply spoke and it was so. God spoke and it was good.

When God speaks, good things happen – very good things happen.

If only the same could be said about us...

When God speaks good things happen. When you and I speak... not so much...

The unfortunate reality is that Genesis 1-2 are followed by Genesis 3.

In Genesis 1-2 we see God speak and good things happen.

In Genesis 3 we see the devil speak, we see humans speak and the results are very different.

You see, it is not just God whose words have power. While our words will never have the power of God to say “let there be light” and it appears, the Bible makes clear that our words nevertheless still hold immense power. Our words have the power to create or destroy, to build up or tear down, to do good or to do evil.

Honestly, this last week, as I thought about the power of words (the power of God's words and the power of our words – specifically, how often we *misuse* the power of our words) I don't even know where to begin. I cannot even tell you how many times and in how many ways I have seen and heard and read words being *misused* by you, the members and friends of St. Paul's – wielding words vicious power for evil rather than good. I cannot tell you how many times and in how many ways *I* have used words and evil, rather than good, was the end result.

You and I have some serious second commandment and eighth commandment issues, friends.

Maybe it's been a while since you memorized the commandments. The second and the eighth commandments are the commandments that have to do with our words – how to use them for good, how to not to use them for evil. The second commandment has to do with how we use our words in relationship to God. The eighth commandment has to do with how we use our words in relationships with each other.

We have issues with both.

The second commandment: “**You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God**” - the commandment that ought to guide the use of our words to the glory and good of God. Every word we speak ought to do good things for God, his name and his reputation. Every word we speak ought to advance and enhance the reputation and name of God. Which means there is absolutely no place for “Oh, my God” in our daily speech. Which means that as *Christians* (ones who bear the name of Jesus *Christ* as our identity) there is no place for a single word that would make someone else question the glory of our God – no single angry outburst, no single selfish rant, no single arrogant boast that would tarnish our reputation and therefore the reputation of the God whose name we carry.

The eighth commandment: “**You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor**” - the commandment that ought to guide the use of words to the glory and good of each other. Every single word we speak about each other and to each other should be said to build up and not tear down, to help each other have a good reputation and not a destroy reputations, to do good not evil. Which means we have no right to say a single thing about someone else behind their back unless those words are words of praise. There is no place for a single word that would make someone else look bad – *even if it is true*. The Bible says there is a correct way to go about correcting someone who has sinned, and it does not include talking about them behind their back.

When God speaks good things happen. The same cannot be said of us. We have second and eighth commandment issues. And if you are ever tempted to doubt the destructive and evil power of your words, realize it was words (the devil's words and Adam and Eve's words) that took God's very good creation and screwed it up. It is the misuse of words by you and me and people just like us that is at the root of so much pain and suffering and not-goodness of this world.

God's words created good. Our words continue to mess it up.

But God had his word written in the Bible so we could know that his word has the power not only to create a good world but also to save an evil world.

In Genesis 1 God tells us how in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth by the power of his word.

In John 1 God tells us how he would save his fallen and ruined creation by the power of that same Word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Friends, when God speaks good things happen – that was true at the beginning and it is true now.

When our Triune God spoke at the beginning the world was created, but that wasn't the last time our God spoke. God's Word took on human flesh and blood in the person of Jesus Christ. Why? To do the exact same thing he had done at the beginning – to create light in the darkness. Only this time it wasn't a physical darkness that had to be overcome, it was spiritual darkness – the consequences of all of our misused words that settle around us as suffocating midnight. The Word became flesh to bring us light. The Word became flesh to bind up what our words had broken. The Word became flesh to heal what our words have destroyed. The Word became flesh to forgive us when our words produced evil instead of good.

That is what John means when he says the Word became flesh bringing grace and truth – *grace*, undeserved love from the God whose creation our words have ruined, and the *truth* that though we have failed our God with our evil words, his creating, restoring, very good Word will never fail us. Jesus' life and ministry, his suffering and death, and his resurrection and ascension speak a better word to this world of sin – they bring light and grace and forgiveness to people with 2nd and 8th commandment issues.

God's word created the world. God's word brought grace. God's word doesn't stop there.

God knew that even when he shined his light in the darkness of this world we would be so wrapped up in and addicted to the darkness of sin, frustratingly inconsistent and incapable of turning from the darkness to the light of God's Word so the God who spoke at creation, the God who spoke at the manger, cross, and empty tomb, spoke again.

2 Corinthians 4:6 says, “**For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.**”

Our Triune God spoke the world into existence.

Our Triune God spoke grace and forgiveness into existence.

And with that same powerfully good and creative word he speaks faith into existence in our hearts. He comes to us through the power of his Word in the Bible, the power of his Word connected with water of Baptism, the power of his Word

connected with the bread and wine in Holy Communion and in no less of a jaw-dropping miracle as the six days of creation, his Word does what it always does – creates good. It creates faith in our hearts that clings to the Word made flesh – to Jesus as the only Savior from the evil, darkness-bringing misuse of words on our part.

From creation to the eternal joys of heaven hear your God speak and know that when your God speaks good things happen.