



“Listen to Teacher”

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, September 1–2, 2018

All Services
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well the busses have been coming to pick up the children going to class, both last week and this week for many of them. So, I was reflecting on my own childhood and the teachers that I have had over the years that I have studied as well. In particular I was thinking about Mrs. Shultz. Mrs. Shultz was my 9th grade social study teacher who taught world cultures. And what made Mrs. Shultz special was she would often when on vacation in the summer, would go to the places that then she would teach about. So of course, she had been to Europe, she had had trips to Japan and China, and she was planning a trip the summer after the class I had her was planning a trip to Russia. And then she would come back with her pictures and artifacts that she had picked up along the way and that would be integrated into her teaching of those places. She is someone who not only taught it, but you might say that she lived it through her travels.

I realize now as an adult that the easy teachers that I had over the course of the years probably really didn't leave me with very much, but it was the hard teachers like Mrs. Shultz with the loads of homework and the really hard tests, those teachers that prodded and poked and challenged me and yes, sometimes even angered me, they are the ones who left me with knowledge and a zeal for learning that I have today. I learned a lot from my teachers.

For example, I learned that small details matter . . . especially in math. All I needed to do was carry the “1.” Oh well! I learned to be kind to, don't be a jerk, to be nice to the people that were around me. I learned to not be afraid to fail because sometimes it was in not carrying the “1” that I learned how to do things the right way and I learned how to challenge myself to grow. I learned to never stop learning, that education was not just about going to school, but was about trying to open my mind to learn as much as I could about all sorts of different kinds of topics.

And honestly, I also learned that when I got in trouble in school I usually deserved it. I learned that those times when I faked being sick, so I could stay home were probably some of the most boring days I ever had in my life. And I also learned that personally I

will probably never ever use trigonometry. And finally, I also learned that nothing in life will ever be as bad as the 7th grade.

How teaching in the Bible in biblical times was very different from what I experienced or what you experienced. There were really no professional teachers, they were just beginning at the time of Jesus to use the term rabbi teacher. There were no classrooms and certainly there was no curriculum. It was a very kind of non-formal instruction. Occasionally there might be some instruction you would get from the local religious elder, but more often than not you learned because you were a part of a family and so you were taught to carry on whatever the family business was. If your father was a rabbi there was a good chance you were going to be a rabbi. If you were a carpenter, you were going to be a carpenter. But what the Bible did teach is that ultimately the great teacher was God himself and his teaching began in scripture at the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve are told don't eat the fruit of that particular tree. They were also allowed to name the animals that God was creating, and so they were able to participate in that instruction of God as he was making creation.

That teaching continues not only from the Book of Genesis but all through the history of Israel. It goes through the giving of the law, the Torah. It goes through the singing of the Psalms in worship and the teach and the admonition of the prophets and it continues in the New Testament through the gospel of Jesus, the Letters of Paul, all the way through to the Book of Revelation.

The whole biblical story is meant to form us, to shape us as followers of God. It flows from God, and one of the phrases that was often used to describe it was that it was *God breathed*. . . *God breathed*. I like to think of it as those rescue breaths of CPR, your breath going in to the life and into the lungs of another person giving them hope and life. That's what God does through his word. It gives us life for it comes from God himself.

Israel had a very special relationship with God and Moses was given the Torah, the Law to pass on to the people. The motivation for learning that Torah, that law is so "*that you may live*", so that you may live and trust in the ways of God. Because it is in obeying God's law that is what make's one wise. Not just in knowing the laws or seeing the laws on a piece of paper or reading the laws in the Bible, it's obeying those laws which makes one wise.

And the scripture reminds us of everything that God has done for his people, and they come to us in the wonder promises of holy scripture. And those promises in the Old Testament then were turned into worship so that the people could relive them over and over and over again. The Commandments of God were a path to life. Life not only in one's religious upbringing, but in their family through the morality, through the protection of the poor, and the widow, and the orphan and those who were most vulnerable. "So now Israel," Moses tells the people "Give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe." We are to bear witness to what God has done because our future depends on passing on to the next generation and the generation after that the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God.

The psalmist confessed, *"Since my youth, O God, you have taught me."* God's teaching, encoded in the laws, the moral teachings, the principles and the commands, stirred among God's people in the Old Testament their highest praise and they used words like "perfect, . . . trustworthy, . . . right, . . . radiant, . . . pure, . . . sure and altogether righteous, . . . more precious than gold, . . . sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb." Such a treasure for you and for me is meant to be shared with others. And the prophets say that when it is shared the whole nations will come streaming so that they can learn and walk in the pathways of God. And so you and I, we listen to these stories again and again through the readings that are read in our 3-year cycle, through the sermons that are shared over and over and over again, the word of God becomes like a diamond with all of these cuts and facets that when you turn it in the light there you see something completely different than you had never seen before. So, it is with the word of God with us. We learn from that word as we live in relationship with God and with each other. Jesus is the great teacher of the Bible. He taught everywhere in the temple and in the synagogues, those official places, but also in homes, in fields, in the streets, and even on anchored boats.

Jesus focused on the things that really mattered. Jesus was not opposed to the rituals or ceremonies or traditions. However, he did not want us to substitute rituals or ceremonies or traditions for compassion and love toward others.

Jesus taught with power because he received his authority from God himself. He taught with creativity with the wonderful stories, the parables that he would share with the people. Those narratives that you and I continue to be enthralled with and learn about. Jesus taught us to listen and also to talk to God teaching his disciples how to pray and for us how to pray. And Jesus taught with compassion caring for the least of these those who were most vulnerable in society, the poor, the widows, the orphans, teaching the sinners. And Jesus taught to challenge us so that we might have new ears as we come into contact with his word so that we might become new people. Jesus said of his disciples, my sheep, hear my voice and they follow me. The words that Jesus spoke, and the words of the gospel writer John was that the words are spirit and light for you and for me.

And so, brothers and sisters, listen to teacher, engage the Bible at home and in church. Grow in his word for in his word is nothing less than life itself. And let us all teach the children and our children's children and share the good news of God in Christ for all those we come into contact with. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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