

**“Do You Have What You Need?”**

*“He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead’” (Luke 16:31).*

I’d like you to consider this question as we begin our time together today, do you have what you need? (Do you have what you need?) A question like this is so general that it forces us to fill in more details. We have to provide certain situations or circumstances that enable us to answer this exact question. I know that for Madeline and me this question is one that we consider frequently and with greater depth having Everett around. It doesn’t matter if it’s going to the store, coming to church or heading out on a bigger trip making sure that we have everything that we need with a little one in the mix makes our answer to this question much longer than it used to be. From diapers, to toys, to extra clothes, drinks and snacks, a stroller and oh, yes, Everett himself, the list of answers for this question is much more involved than it used to be for us!

Likewise, for many of you, as you heard this question, I imagine you either added the details needed for you to answer this personally or you’ve been growing a little restless with me wondering what kind of context that I want you to use as you consider this question. Considering this same question, let me ask it again with some specific details. Do you have what you need for heaven? (Do you have what you need for heaven?) Once again, two words, “for heaven”, dramatically change how we consider and answer this question. And sadly, the list of answers to this question over the years have been all over the place which can turn this question into a much more complicated and complex one for many to answer.

While this question, “Do you have what you need for heaven?” may be a struggle and challenge for people to answer, and maybe for us personally to answer, I’m here to tell you that we do have what we need for heaven. Our answer to this question, can and should be a resounding, yes, we have what we need! We have been given God’s Word. It’s God’s Word by the power of the Holy Spirit that works faith in us. It’s God’s Word that directs our faith to hold onto Jesus who lived, died and rose for our salvation and forgiveness. It’s God’s Word that is delivered to us in the waters of Holy Baptism and in, with and under, the bread and wine of Holy Communion for forgiveness, life and salvation. It’s God’s Word that informs, guides and directs our lives to be caring and compassionate to our neighbor’s needs in response to the forgiveness, life and salvation we have received.

Yet, throughout our lives, when answering this question, “Do you have what you need for heaven?” or some variation, saying “Yes, because we have God’s Word!” doesn’t often seem like enough. So many things in this broken and sin-filled life wash over our child-like faith eroding it away until the sharp, clear lines of God’s Word are smoothed over and replaced by everchanging secular and popular beliefs. And whatever ends up replacing God’s Word only makes answering this question, “Do you have what you need for heaven?” much more complicated.

The end of this weekend’s Gospel reading highlights this struggle quite clearly. In our reading, Jesus is continuing to teach to an audience that included His disciples as well as the Pharisees. In response to the Pharisees’ ridicule about His teaching on either serving God or money, not both, Jesus shares with them this account of the rich man and a very poor man, Lazarus. As you heard, moments ago, both the rich man and Lazarus die. The rich man goes to hell and Lazarus goes to heaven. Then we have this unique conversation between the rich man and Abraham and the end of their conversation is quite revealing. The rich man in his torment desires

that his family be warned by Lazarus about the torment of hell but the rich man is instead told that they have what they need in Moses and the Prophets, God's Word. However, the rich man doesn't think God's Word will be enough for his family they need something else, someone else from the dead to go and warn them. To the rich man's request, Abraham doubles down on his previous statement, if God's Word isn't enough, then neither will be something miraculous like someone rising from the dead.

This rich man's comments concerning Moses and the Prophets, God's Word, are so relatable! All of us have viewed, or will likely at some point view God's Word just like the rich man. God's Word can't be enough for heaven just as it is, His Word needs help! If only we had this miraculous experience then we would be certain that we have what we need for heaven! Yet the convicting truth remains, if we can't believe that we have enough for heaven in the saving words and works of the Savior Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, what eternal good does a miraculous healing or miraculous escape from death or any other miracle we could long for actually do us? Saving faith, while it is a miracle, it isn't created by miraculous experiences, it's created by God's Word! Saving faith isn't effective because of miraculous experiences, it's effective because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection which God's Word shares with us.

However, miraculous experiences aren't the only thing we resort to when we find God's Word ineffective. We also like to believe that we have everything we need for heaven because we think that we're pretty good people overall. And one way we measure how good we think we are, just like the Pharisees did-, is by the earthly blessings we have been given. The other way we like to measure how good we think are is by our service to those in need to someone just like the poor man, Lazarus. But heaven isn't something we win by our earthly blessings or our service to those in need. Heaven has been won for us by Jesus as God's Word tells us and because heaven is already won for us we get to share our earthly blessings and to serve our neighbor in need as a foretaste of what is to come.

Friends, today we rejoice because we have what is needed for heaven. We have God's Word and all that it reveals to us about Jesus and all that He has done for us! What's even more amazing is that we have what is needed for heaven for those around us. For our families, friends, workmates, classmates, neighbors and complete strangers, we have God's Word, and just like with us, it is exactly what they need for heaven. Just as God's Word points us to Jesus and His saving and forgiving work for us upon the cross by the power of the Holy Spirit this same Word will point them to their Lord and Savior Jesus too!

So, we continue to be in God's Word through song, study and prayer! We encourage each other to further our connection to what God says in the Bible. We face and engage challenges others raise to God's Word in gentleness and respect trusting that God's Word will continue to be our anchor as it has been before. We mourn rejection of God's Word, not doubting the Word's effectiveness, but rather clinging to and hoping in God's desire for all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. We celebrate baptisms and communion where God's Word is powerfully effective in such humble means. We give thanks for confirmations, Christian, biblical marriages and the funerals of believers as visual reminders of the ongoing impact of God's Word in our present day. Most of all, we endure in God's Word knowing that we have what we need for heaven even as our Lord returns very soon. So, we pray, come, quickly Lord Jesus, Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan