

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
"Sola Scriptura"

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Hymns: Sing them over again to me 498, Jesus loves me 373, A mighty fortress is our God 315, PRAISE: Planted deep in the Word, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet 496, Seek ye first CHOIR "Remember Me" Cindy Barry

October 1, All Ages Sunday

Rev. Steve Filyk

If you have been here

For any period of time

You'll quickly realise that the Bible is very important to us.

We all stand up

When it is brought down the aisle

At the beginning of the service.

We don't just bring it in for ceremony.

Some reads from it.

And someone preaches from it.

And most of us listen intently.

If you have been here

For any period of time

you know that the Bible is very important to us.

But have you ever considered

Just why the Bible is so important to the church?

If we are looking for wisdom,

we could pass over today's psalm,

and read a few pages from Stephen Covey.

"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"

Has sold millions of copies.

While it was first published in 1989

it remains one of the most popular and influential
self-help book today.ⁱ

If we are looking for inspiration

We could switch out the New Testament lesson

with a heartwarming story from "Chicken Soup for the Soul".

Readers love those tales.

There are over 250 different titles now available.ⁱⁱ

Of course if we want to include the children

We could turn to Dr. Seuss.

Not only does he teach literacy

But addresses issues of the consumerism and the environment.ⁱⁱⁱ

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas" is just one of his many tales.

"Oh the places you'll go!"

[Start reading from the book...]

There are many different books

We could be reading from each Sunday.

And yet the church has decided

that the Bible alone has a special place.

So why is that?

Why is that?

Well it might have something to with the Bible's purpose.

It might have something to do with the Bible's content.

It might have something to do with the Bible's nature

and origin.

Our 'Call to Worship' from Psalm 19

lauds the Bible as a source of wisdom and encouragement:

The NIV notes how it:

"[refreshes] the soul... makes wise the simple...

[gives] joy to the heart"^{iv}

Peterson's paraphrase describes the Bible

In a more contemporary idiom, saying it:

"pulls our lives together... points out the right road...
[shows] the way to joy"^v

Our epistle lesson adds further that

The Bible is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting
And training in righteousness,
So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped
For every good work."^{vi}

All to say that the Bible has the function

Of shaping and developing our character
So that it might express both the kindness
and the justice of God.

But if the Bible has incredible purpose,
this is matched by its incredible content.

The Bible reveals God's plan of rescue,
For the entire world, for all the nations.

The story begins with the promises of prophets,
It unfolds in the birth and life of Jesus Christ.
It reaches its climax in Jesus' death and resurrection.
It invites our participation in a work that is ongoing
Till the rescue plan is complete.

Martin Luther said that "the Bible is the cradle where Jesus Christ is laid"
Our tradition reminds us that the written word
reveals the living word, Jesus Christ.^{vii}

Today we are told that the Bible is "able
to make you wise for salvation
Through faith in Jesus Christ."^{viii}

"Scripture makes us wise in the broadest and deepest sense.

[It] can help us think in new patterns,
see things we hadn't seen before,
understand ourselves and other people
and God and the world...

and ultimately find ourselves rescued,
saved, from the downward pull of sin and death,
and transformed by God's forgiving grace
so that we become part of his new creation."^{ix}

The Bible has an exalted purpose.

The Bible has incredible content.
And the Bible ultimately finds its origin in God.

We read in Scripture

that "prophecy never had its origin in the human will,
but prophets, though human,
spoke from God
as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."^x

Today's epistle tells us that Scripture is inspired or "God-breathed".^{xi}

Scripture is not inspired inasmuch we might say
That a work of art is inspired.

To say that Scripture is 'God-breathed'
Means that the Bible is a product of God's own will and power.
Even further that the Bible has God's living breath in it.^{xii}

That's a pretty amazing claim.

To be true other books
Will make claims such as these.
Claims about a divine origin,
or an exalted purpose or content.

But in the past 2000 years
The church has validated that claim to be true
Again and again and again.

And so with confidence
 we declare it to be our "primary rule of faith and life...
 The standard of all teaching by which we test any word
 That comes to us from tradition,
 world, or inner experience..."^{xiii}

Let me tell you about a young man named Gus.

Gus grew up in a home where his mom loved Jesus,
 Even if his father didn't care much for the faith.

Gus was a bright boy
 But he found his mother's faith to be restrictive and simplistic.

It didn't allow him to live as he pleased;
 friends with benefits.

He was intellectually curious
 and the church just wasn't answering his questions.

So for many years he drifted.
 He explored different philosophies
 and found work as a teacher.

But his rootless morality bothered him.

And then he met a church leader
 Who hadn't parked his brains,
 And took Gus' questions seriously.

Early one morning as Gus was enjoying the sunshine in his garden
 He heard a child's voice saying:
 "Take it and read it; take it and read it."

He grabbed a nearby book,
 Paul's Letter to the Romans.
 And he read this passage from Romans 13:

"We can't afford to waste a minute,
 must not squander these precious daylight hours
 in frivolity and indulgence,
 in sleeping around and dissipation,
 in bickering and grabbing everything in sight.

Get out of bed and get dressed!
 Don't loiter and linger,
 waiting until the very last minute.
 Dress yourselves in Christ,
 and be up and about!"^{xiv}

"Dress yourselves in Christ,
 and be up and about."

As Gus finished reading that last sentence
 He knew that God was finally taking hold of him,
 Both heart and mind.

By the work of the Holy Spirit
 that God-breathed passage
 had pierced his stubborn heart.

Gus or St Augustine as most of us know him
 Went on to be one of the most notable teachers
 That the church has ever had.^{xv}

Some people will tell you that the Bible is just a bunch of baloney.
 That it should be kept in the fiction section of the library,
 That it should be left alone to gather dust.

The truth is that it is a sword and hammer,
 A seed and a lantern.
 It is as precious as gold and as sweet as honey.

It is God-breathed.
 By the power of the Holy Spirit it will make you wise for salvation
 And equipped for every good work.

ⁱ See “10 Most Popular Self Help Books Ever” www.therichest.com/rich-list/most-popular/10-most-popular-self-help-books-ever/

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ see “Dr. Seuss” *Wikipedia*

^{iv} Psalm 19:7-8 NIV

^v Psalm 19:7-8 MSG

^{vi} 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV

^{vii} see *Living Faith* 5.0

^{viii} 2 Timothy 3:15 NIV

^{ix} N.T. Wright *Paul for Everyone: the Pastoral Letters* 121

^x 2 Peter 1:21 NIV

^{xi} 2 Timothy 3:16 NIV

^{xii} see N.T. Wright *Paul for Everyone: the Pastoral Letters* 120 and “Inspiration” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 651

^{xiii} “Question 65” *A Catechism for Today* PCC 64

^{xiv} I’ve taken the quote from Romans 13:13-14 MSG

^{xv} see “Augustine’s Life” <http://library.thinkquest.org/18775/augustine/bioau.htm>

and “386 Augustine Converts to Christianity”

www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-28/386-augustine-converts-to-christianity.html