

**Sermon Transcript**  
**08.10.2025**  
**Hebrews 4:12-13**

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- Good morning. Please open to Hebrews 4.
- As you do, I'll tell you a story from the summer of 1992. I was 14. The Cold War was officially over. Z Cavaricci and Girbaud jeans were in style. The Cowboys were on the cusp of greatness. Jordan was on top of the world. Michael Keaton was Batman. OJ Simpson was well respected. And I took my annual trip to visit my grandparents in AZ.
- My grandparents owned a motorhome so we would travel all around the southwest each summer. I'd fly into Vegas and they'd pick me up and we'd go the Grand Canyon, Zion, or Bryce National Parks, but this particular year I brought along my buddy, Kyle, and we went to Tombstone. This was the year before the classic movie came out so I hadn't seen it yet or I would have called everyone a huckleberry or a lunger.
- We went to the old Boothill cemetery and the OK Corral and saw some of the old saloons that had been turned into souvenir shops where Kyle and I each bought knives. Now, when I say knife, don't think of a pocketknife. We each bought these huge fixed blade knives with leather sheaths. Think of a Rambo or Jim Bowie or Crocodile Dundee sized knife.
- And we got in the car to drive back to the campground and my buddy and I decided to see whose knife was sharper. So we each started to see if we could shave our own arms or legs to see if it was sharp enough to cut hair.
- Kids I don't recommend this. Its foolish. Be wiser than 14 year old me.
- So we're doing this while driving down the road with hundreds of miles of desert around us and all of a sudden Kyle sliced his leg open...and it was pretty deep...and it immediately started bleeding profusely.
- Now, I'm at an age where I'm dumb enough to do something like trying to shave with an unsterilized knife while driving down the road, but I'm also smart enough to know that this is stupid so I don't want to tell my grandparents.
- So I quietly grab their little first aid kit that's in the back of the car and start putting whatever I can on the wound. Gauze, bandaids, tape, whatever.
- But its not stopping. It was like Kyle was a hemophiliac. After about 15 minutes, when all the dressings were soaked through, I had to sheepishly tell my grandparents what was happening and they turned around and the backseat looked like a civil war surgical tent with discarded bloody tissues and bandages strewn about.
- As you can imagine, Mumps and Grumps were not pleased.
- We never really proved whose knife was sharper, but we definitely proved that his was sharp enough.
- And that's what our passage is about this morning. The Word of God is not only sharp, but sharp enough to do what its intended by God to do.

- What is it intended to do and what does that have to do with the context of Hebrews 4? We'll see as we dive in.
- First, let's pray.
- Self, others, me.

***For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)***

- The past few weeks, we've seen an analogy between OT Israel and the NT church. Like them, we have had good news preached to us. Also like them, we're waiting for the fullness of God's promises. There is a sense in which we have entered God's rest and another sense in which we are waiting. There is an already, but not yet nature to our rest. And like them, we are faced with a choice to believe and obey or to disbelieve and disobey like the wilderness generation did.
- This was particularly the context for the 1<sup>st</sup> century audience to whom the author writes. They were Jewish Christians who were facing persecution and thus tempted to recant, to renounce Christ, to apostatize and leave the church for the semblance of safety provided in the synagogue and the Mosaic Law.
- So the author has quoted from Psalm 95 throughout chapters 3 and 4 in order to draw the comparison between the first generation of the church and the wilderness generation and this fits with the overall theme of the book which is the supremacy and superiority of Christ.
- Christ is better than the angels in chapters 1 and 2. Better than Moses in chapter 3. Better than Joshua last week. In chapters 5-10, He is a better priest who offers a better sacrifice in fulfillment of a better covenant built on better promises.
- And, as we've mentioned before, that has profound implications for our own lives because Christ is better than the lies of adultery or porn or divorce or sloth or narcissism or entitlement or greed or chauvinism or feminism or whatever else tempts us to drift and fall and wander.
- We'll see the author apply this sort of thinking in chapter 11 where we read things like:
  - *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* (Hebrews 11:6)
  - *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.* (Hebrews 11:16)
  - *[Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.* (Hebrews 11:26)
- Notice how belief in God's supremacy and superiority is what motivated the patriarchs to faithfulness. Faith sees through the fog of war and the mirage of sin and is able to grasp the goodness of God's promises even in the midst of hardship.

- So when God issues commands, faith is what helps us to see that those commands are aimed toward our flourishing. God’s commands aren’t killjoy, they’re the proper soil in which joy is cultivated. All of God’s commands are good and right and true and beautiful.
- And the way that He issues command is through His word.
- And over the past few months, we’ve seen a continuous appeal to the word of God. In fact, from the very beginning of the book, that’s an emphasis. Let’s briefly walk through some examples so you can see how prevalent and pervasive this the centrality of the word is to Hebrews:
  - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* (Hebrews 1:1–2)
  - Then throughout the rest of the chapter, the author quotes from the OT by saying things like:
    - *For to which of the angels did God ever say...* (Hebrews 1:5)
    - *And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says...* (Hebrews 1:6)
    - *Of the angels he says...* (Hebrews 1:7)
    - *But of the Son he says...* (Hebrews 1:8)
    - *And to which of the angels has he ever said...* (Hebrews 1:13)
    - *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.* (Hebrews 2:1)
    - And in 2:6-8 he quotes Psalm 8
    - And in 2:12-13 he quotes Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8
    - Then in Chapters 3 and 4 he quotes extensively from Psalm 95 which is itself an exposition on the events of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- So the word of God has been central to the argument that the author is making.
- And he comes back to that by saying FOR the word of God is living and active...
- The word “for” here links the context in two ways. First, it connects back to the centrality of Psalm 95 over the past chapter and a half, but it also continues the theme of chapters 1 and 2 with their focus on the primacy of the word.
- In other words the presupposition of the authority and power of God’s word is fundamental to the whole argument of the book. How does God create and redeem and judge? It is through His word!
- Now, before we explore what he says about the word, we need to first understand what he means by the word.
- In the context, we see two different uses. First, we see the word in the OT that he has generously quoted.
- But second, we see the word in reference to the message of, about, and by Christ.
- In short, we could say that the word of God is summed up in the entirety of Scripture, both Old and New Testament, although I think the author is actually thinking a bit more broadly than this as we’ll see.
- Notice that the word is described as living and active.

- You might recall that we saw God himself described as the “living” God back in chapter 3.
  - *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. (Hebrews 3:12)*
- We’ll see the same title of the living God in chapters 9, 10, and 12 which is interesting because it kinda clues us in to a theme we see elsewhere in Scripture which is that Scripture will often talk about itself as it talks about God.
- Scripture is described using the same attribute as its author. It is living as God is living.
- So for instance, in Galatians, Paul says that Scripture foresees. And elsewhere, we read that Scripture speaks or says. Notice the personification of Scripture as if Scripture were a person.
- Sometimes Christians are accused of worshiping God the Father, Son and Holy Bible which is a funny line, but misleading as if its possible to have too high a regard for Scripture. Do we worship Scripture? Of course not. There is a distinction between Scripture and God, BUT, and this is crucial to grasp, though there is a conceptual distinction, there can be no division between God and the Bible.
- That’s what Protestants mean by the doctrine of sola Scriptura. We are dependent on the Scripture in order to infallibly apprehend God.
- We see that play out in places like John 5
  - *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. (John 5:39–40)*
- Christ is clear that life is only found in Him. And yet how do we find Him? Through the witness of the Word. In other words, Scripture is not an end to itself, but it IS a necessary means to the end which is God Himself.
- That’s why we cannot separate God from His word.
- Look at Psalm 138:2
  - *...you have exalted above all things your name and your word. (Psalm 138:2)*
  - Some have even translated this as: You have exalted your word above all your name!
- And when it comes to the Word, we see that Christ Himself is revealed as the word of God.
- So do we worship the Bible? No. But do we worship the Word of God? Yes.
- So what does that mean? It means that as Christians we should reverence and sanctify the Scriptures because in them we find the one whom alone we worship.
  - “God is, so to speak, what God says.” (Tom Schreiner)
  - So there is a sense in which Scripture possesses many of the attributes of God Himself. Because God is true, Scripture is true. Because God is faithful, Scripture is faithful. Because God is authoritative, Scripture is authoritative. The word is living and active because God himself is the living and active God.
  - In other words, we derive our understanding of what Scripture is from who God is.

- I mention all of that because the author of Hebrews is using the idea of the word of God in an expansive way. Yes, it refers to the OT that He's quoted. And yes it refers to the message about Christ that he's referenced, but there is another sense in which the word is bigger than just Scripture as we'll see in verse 13, but first let's see what he says about the word in vs. 12.
- He says that it is living and active. Again, its more than a book. A book is an inanimate object. A book isn't a living being. But the word of God is living.
- Not only that, but its active.
  - This points to what theologians call the efficacy of the word. In fact, the word translated as active is sometimes translated as effective as in 1 Corinthians 16:9 and Philemon 6
    - *for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.* (1 Corinthians 16:9)
    - *and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.* (Philemon 6)
  - And we see this idea of the active nature of the word in 1 Thessalonians 2:13
    - *And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
  - Notice that the word is working.
- The efficacy of Scripture is a reminder that when God speaks, His will is accomplished.
  - I've got a little Google device that one of our deacons set up in my office and sometimes it's a bit ornery. Sometimes I'll say, hey google turn on the lights and nothing happens. God's word isn't like that. It never buffers or disappoints.
- The word is performing a speech act. Like in the book of Genesis where God said let there be light. What happens?
  - Did the creation form a committee to discuss the potential benefits of illumination? Is there a long debate with the darkness? Do the angels take a vote as to whether or not God's will should be done? Of course not. There is no back & forth between the Creator & creation. God says let there be light & there is light. Immediately, impressively, intensely. His speech effectually creates...& the same thing happens when we read Scripture. Somehow, mysteriously...graciously...sovereignly...God works in us that which He desires.
- As Herman Bavinck says:
  - "[Scripture] is spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore always effective...continually sustained, preserved, and made powerful by that Spirit." (Herman Bavinck)
  - In other words, the same attributes of authority & sovereignty that are ascribed to the Spirit are also ascribed to that which is inspired by the Spirit, breathed out by the Spirit.

- For perhaps the most well known passage on the efficacy of the word, consider Isaiah 55
  - *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10–11)*
- It accomplishes what God purposes! It succeeds in the purposes for which it is sent. It does whatever He desires. BTW, that's really hard to reconcile if you have a more Arminian view of God's call. If the gospel call is simply something that goes out recklessly & lavishly to all without exception in the exact same way, then does that not undermine the efficacy of God's word?
- So the word is powerful and what does that power do in the context of chapter 4, it discerns, it discriminates, it distinguishes. It penetrates and pierces.
- To make that point, the author uses the metaphor of a sword which is something we see elsewhere.
  - *and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God... (Ephesians 6:17)*
- And in the book of revelation, the word of God who is the Son, is portrayed as having a sharp sword coming from his mouth.
  - *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. (Revelation 19:15)*
- And you can use a sword for a number of purposes. Obviously, you use it in battle. But this particular Greek word for sword could also be used of a short sword or a knife or dagger.
- That's important when we consider the use. The point of the imagery of a sword in Hebrews 4 is to divide. I've got a sword that I purchased in Mexico decades back and I sometimes let my son play with it. Why would I ever let my 6 year old son play with a sword? Because its not sharp. But the word is sharper than any two-edged sword. That would be like us comparing it to a razor blade or a scalpel or an authentic samurai katana.
- Think back to those 90s infomercials where someone would show a knife slicing through an aluminum can or a shoe or something to show how sharp it is. That's the idea.
- In fact, the author is saying that its so sharp that it can divide what can't be divided. To use a modern illustration, we might say that it cuts through a diamond or vibranium or something.
- That's what he means by soul and spirit and joint and marrow. He isn't saying that there is a difference between soul and spirit, but rather its the fact that they're synonymous that's the point. God's word can divide what is otherwise indivisible. BTW, sometimes people use this passage to argue for a trichotomous view of humanity; that we are body, soul, and spirit. We talked about why that was unlikely and why we should view soul

and spirit as overlapping in meaning a couple of months ago in our TEC on anthropology, the doctrine of man.

- And this same idea is relates to the joint and marrow. He's not giving an anatomical lesson about bones and fatty tissue and stuff. He's saying, God's word is able to do even what we can't conceive as being possible. In a first century context, this is no way to divide joint and marrow.
- And yet God's word can divide what is indivisible. After all, as we saw in chapter 1, Christ is upholding the universe by the word of his power so I'd imagine that's a pretty sovereign word.
- What this means is that everything that ails us is but a word away from healing and restoration. We see that in the gospels. The storm rages until Christ commands it to shut up...the demons rage until Christ says to be gone. And when He returns, the sword from His mouth will conquer His enemies.
- So even now, the cancer that ravages your body, the marital struggle that you face, the sin which seems so enslaving, the wayward kid, the persecution of the first century, the power of the temptation to fall away, all of those are beholden to God's sovereign word because its living and active and does what is seemingly impossible.
- And that means it can even discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It can discern whether, in the context of Hebrews, someone is falling away or striving to enter, whether someone is disbelieving or trusting, whether they are faithful or disobedient.
- The word can penetrate through our persona and pretense and presumption and hypocrisy. And, as we'll see, lay us bare and exposed.
- As Jeremiah 17:9-10 reminds us
  - *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."* (Jeremiah 17:9-10)
- Why do you do what you do? Biblically speaking, we don't even know ourselves fully. But God knows us. He sees beneath the façade and knows our deepest being.
- Now, in the context of Hebrews, the purpose isn't so much to reveal every secret thought or desire in general, though God possesses that ability, but rather, in context this refers to discerning our fundamental allegiance and affection.
- In other words, both Judas and Peter were disciples. Both Judas and Peter betrayed Christ. The word sees beyond the superficial similarities and discerns the fundamental distinction between them and so the same is true of us.
- The similarities between a true Christian and a hypocrite are many. Both might go to church. Both might confess similar doctrines. Both struggle with sin. And yet one does so with repentance & regret and the other does so with complacency. So God's word distinguishes between those who are imperfect, but faithful like Joshua and Caleb and those whose disobedience is rooted in actual rebellion & disbelief, like the vast majority of Israel.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 13.

***And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13)***

- Here is where we see some ambiguity. Its hard to tell if the author is talking about the word of God as something external to God or if He's talking about God Himself. Whether the word of God inscripturated or incarnate. In a sense, its not an either/or, but a both/and because God always works through His word. God's word is so closely associated with God that to speak of the one is also to speak of the other in a sense.
- And this particular passage on the illuminating and revealing nature of the word reminds me of Psalm 19 which begins with this:
  - *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)*
- Then in vss. 2-5 the author describes the revealing effects of creation and especially the sun culminating in verse 6 which reads:
  - *Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. (Psalm 19:6)*
- Pay attention to the phrase "nothing hidden."
- At that point, the psalm shifts from talking about general revelation in creation to the special revelation of the word of God. Look at vs. 7
  - *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple... (Psalm 19:7)*
- Then in vss. 8-11, we have an exposition of the efficacy of the word, law, or commands of God ultimately culminating in vss. 12-13 which reads:
  - *Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. (Psalm 19:12-13)*
- Notice the phrase hidden faults. And think back to vs. 6 which says that nothing is hidden from the sun. In other words, the same way that the sun illuminates the entire sky, so the word of God illuminates the hidden places of the human heart.
- BTW, notice the fact that David is not threatened by the fact that God sees & knows all. Rather than endangered, He's comforted & encouraged by God's all-seeing eye. Why? Because God can only heal what He knows! And because we sometimes don't even know what to confess because many of our sins are hidden even from us. And in fact, we don't even know what to pray for as we ought as Romans 8 says. So far, from being a threat, the omniscience & omnipresence of God should be a comfort & encouragement. It should beckon us closer rather than drive us away!
- As we'll see shortly, this is the difference between the fear of the LORD which is commended in Scripture and the type of fear that causes us to flee.
- This is a theme we see throughout Scripture. Adam and Eve found that out when they tried to play the most one-sided game of hide and go seek ever. Jonah learned the lesson whilst hiding in a big fish in the middle of the sea.
- David cries out in Psalm 139

- *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* (Psalm 139:7–8)
- Look at some other passages that make this same point:
  - *Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.* (Jeremiah 23:24)
  - *The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.* (Psalm 33:13–15)
  - *Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.* (1 Corinthians 4:5)
- From these passages, we deduce the doctrines of the omniscience & omnipresence of God. He sees and knows all. And again, this should be a comfort to us.
- That’s one of the things that this passage provides as a bridge between last week’s look at Hebrews 4:1-11 and vs. 14-16 that we’ll look at next time.
- Last week we saw the command to fear. In 4:1 “let us fear” was the divine demand. And yet there is a type of fear that drives us away and a type that drives us toward.
- As we see in our text today, there is nowhere to flee. Nowhere to hide. And so we have no other choice, but to draw near as we’ll read next time in vs. 16
  - *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* (Hebrews 4:16)
- Again, the fact that God is omniscient isn’t a threat to your joy, but is a foundation. Because it means that He is intimately acquainted with your sins & your weaknesses. And yet He loved you. Even while we were enemies, Christ died for us. And His omniscience means that He knows exactly what is wrong and what needs to be done to make it right.
- And given the fact that His word is sovereign and efficacious as we read in vs. 12, we can be confident that He is ultimately able to help. So rather than flee, we draw near.
- We read that we are all naked and exposed to Him.
- The word naked is obvious in meaning. I think there is even a hint of an allusion to the Genesis account where Adam and Eve were originally naked and unashamed, but when they sin they hide and attempt to cover themselves with fig leaves as opposed to the gospel which suggests that in our nudity we draw near in confidence of God’s own covering.
- But the word for exposed is interesting. It’s what’s called a hapax legomenon which is a phrase that you don’t have to know, but just means that this Greek word only occurs once in the Bible.
  - It’s from the word trachelos which means neck as in trachea.
- What does a neck have to do with exposure and nakedness?
- Well, think of an animal’s neck exposed for sacrifice. Or even a wrestler holding his opponent defenseless. When I was a kid, my older brother would sit on my chest and

hold my arms down with his knees and let our dog just lick my face while I ineffectually squirmed.

- The idea is total defenselessness, total futility. Your attempts to hide from God are defenseless, so why try? Its foolish, futile, vain, useless. So, instead, draw near. That's what he's saying in context.
- The choice of the wilderness generation was clear. They could enter into God's rest and thus enjoy the benefits of His sovereignty or they could rebel & suffer the consequences of judgment.
- The same is true of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Hebrews. They could hold fast to Christ & enjoy the promises of the better covenant or they could drift and fall away to that which is inferior and obsolete.
- And we face the same challenge today. We can cling to the word and the fountain of living water or we can hew out for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.
- So, how then shall we live?
- I'm reminded of YHWH's words to the second generation on the cusp of the promised land. For 40 years they had wandered, but as they are preparing to take possession, God says this in Dt. 8
  - *And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (Deuteronomy 8:2-3)*
- Notice the point of the manna. It was to teach dependence. Dependence on what? The word of the LORD.
- And Jesus speaks of this in his sermon on the mount when he commends reliance upon daily bread. We are in constant need of the word. After all, as we mentioned earlier, the word of Christ sustains the very universe. You are breathing right now because Christ says so. There is no disease or disorder that has entered into your life apart from God's sovereign will. He is utterly sovereign over the chaos as Ed preached a few weeks back. But this is a lesson we must learn and it will take decades of wandering to learn it. We must learn to live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.
- We see this interesting paradox where we have a responsibility. There is something we do. We have to draw near. We have to believe. We have to obey. We have to learn. That's the command.
- Yet God is the one who is sovereign. He is the one who calls & draws us & even grants us the faith to believe. His word works in us to accomplish His will. Apart from Him we can do nothing.
- So its no contradiction to confess that if you do draw near & hold fast & stand firm, God gets all the glory while also confessing that if you drift & fall away & disobey you get all

the blame. That's not a contradiction, that's the mystery of God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

- So, if you ARE hardening, if you ARE drifting. If you are apathetic or complacent, the word is a jackhammer to break up the concrete and an anchor to keep you tethered.
- And if you are timid or fainthearted or fearful, the word is a refuge and comfort.
- God's word is two-edged & dual-purposed. It can comfort the afflicted & afflict the comfortable. It can bless and curse, justify and judge. It takes those who are obstinate and stands over them as an executioner's sword, but it also takes the broken hearted and defeats their enemies.
- So in light of that, I think the main application of this text is to immerse yourself in the word. Now, by that, I don't just mean have a quiet time. Should you set aside time each and every day to memorize and meditate on and pray and study the word? Absolutely.
- To that end, we have a seminar next Saturday morning on why and how to study the Bible so you can be faithful and equipped to that end.
- Reading the Bible is essential. If that's not a genuine priority in your life, don't make excuses. Instead repent. Repent that you have treated God's word as common and profane. Repent that you are presuming upon God's grace while avoiding His means of grace.
- So, yes and amen to reading more of the Bible. You don't need a Th.M. You don't need to be able to read Hebrew and Greek, but you need to drink deeply of the Bible...and yet I mean much more than that when I say to immerse yourself in the word.
- I mean that you should prioritize your life around the word. As Moses wrote to Israel in Dt 6:4-9
  - *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*  
(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
- We should pursue the word with the same diligence, intensity, and passion today.
- This means prioritizing church services so you can hear the word in preaching and sing it in song and see and taste it in communion and baptism. You'll notice our liturgy each week is simply attempting to partake of the word through different means. We read the word and pray the word and sing the word and hear the word and taste the word and see the word.
- So, if you aren't prioritizing the weekly gathering, don't make excuses, but repent. Repent of your laziness or apathy or selfishness or arrogance or other priorities or whatever.
- But immersing yourself in the word means more than just reading the Bible & coming to church, it also means being involved in the type of community where you don't just talk about the Cowboys & Rangers & new recipes for sourdough, but where you're talking

about life & bringing the word of God to bear on it. Where you're confessing your sins as defined by the word & seeking forgiveness as defined by the word & loving your wife & respecting your husband as defined by the word & discipling & disciplining your kids & handling your finances & spending your time & everything else in light of the word.

- Where you're being disciplined & disciplined & rebuked & encouraged & confronted & comforted by the word.
- This doesn't happen by accident or osmosis. This takes intentionality and effort. It takes discipline and practice and repentance. It takes constancy and humility...which, by the way, are fruits of the word working in our lives, making us more like Christ.
- That's again the great mystery of sanctification. We need humility in order to go to the word, but it is only the word that produces humility in us. We need faith to go to the word and yet it is the word that grants us faith.
- As Paul writes, faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ.
- So, today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.
- Let's pray.

### **Communion**

- Fence table
- For communion this morning, I just want to read some Scripture over you and trust the word to do its work in each of us.
- As I do, I want to ask you to pray that God would convict you of hidden or presumptuous sins and to encourage you to persevere and draw near. Ask the Lord to use His inscripturated word to make you look more like the incarnate word.
- So I'm going to read the account of Christ's Passover and institution of the Lord's supper from Mark's gospel.
- Mark 14, starting in vs. 12 reads:
- *And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for*

*many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (Mark 14:12–25)*

- This is the word of the Lord.
- And now we turn our attention from hearing and reading to tasting.
- The body of Christ...