

Is. 66:5 “Word-Centred Worship”

For the Children: A powerful speech can send a shiver down your spine, or even make your hands shake. But God’s Word is more powerful than any mere man. His Word makes His children “tremble.” That means we take it very seriously, love it, and don’t want to break it. We hear that Word when we read the Bible at home, at the Christian school, and at church. In church, the Word is read and preached. The sacraments also bring us the Word. If we take it seriously, we should try to listen as carefully as we can. **Questions:** How can you show that you really do love God’s Word? How can you improve your listening to God’s Word? What are some things that churches do today that give a less important place to God’s Word?

Introduction:

First Point: The Right Attitude to the Word

- 1) Hearing the Word: “Hearing” means a true, inner, spiritual hearing. Many in Israel only heard outwardly (Is. 6:9f, 43:8, Jer. 5:21, Ezk. 12:2 etc). The proper hearing involves recognizing that the Word is truly *God’s Word* and treating it accordingly
- 2) Trembling at the Word: “Fear” of the Word is inseparable from fear of God. It means treating His Word with reverence and awe, with a fear of breaking it
- 3) The Impact on Worship: The Lord is central in our worship, therefore His Word must be also. Since we take His Word seriously we seek to remove man-made elements from worship, leaving the Word in full focus. The Word is delivered through the reading of Scripture, preaching, and the administration of the sacraments. The Word must also direct our response to the Word – in prayer, singing, offerings and the hearing of Scripture. These are the ordinary elements of worship. The “regulative principle” governs which elements we have and the form and manner in which we respond. Hence WCF 21:5 deals with both the faithful delivering of the Word and faithful response to it e.g. hearing in a conscientious way, with understanding, faith and reverence

Second Point: Opposition to the Word

- 1) Opposition to the Faithful: Isaiah talks about those within the church who hate their faithful brethren exclude them, and mock them – for the sake of the Lord’s Name. Those who hate God and His Word do not like to be shown up by those who are faithful. They therefore persecute those who stand up for the truth. See BCF 29
- 2) Undermining the Word: Behind the opposition to those who tremble at the Word, lies the attempt to undermine the use of God’s Word in worship. There are many ways in which this is being done today – replacing the preaching with non-verbal or non-revelatory elements, “dumbing-down” the preaching, making it less doctrinal or failing to deal with the whole counsel of God. Increasingly, the cause of evangelism and missions tends to overshadow the building-up of God’s people in the knowledge of His Word. The skill of hearing is also under attack in a society that prefers to have a high level of visual stimulus rather than simply attending to the preached Word. Likewise, the general lack of self-discipline makes preparation for worship less common

Third Point: The Triumph of the Word

- 1) The Wicked Put to Shame: Those who have opposed God, His Word and His godly ones will eventually be put to shame – a reversal of the shame they tried to bring upon the faithful. The Word will triumph – as it always does (Is. 55:11) because Christ (the Word) is triumphant
- 2) The Faithful Rejoice: There is also the irony that the mocking call to the faithful, by God’s enemies - to glorify God and rejoice – will actually be done in a positive sense. The faithful can rejoice in the triumphs of God’s Word even now, and will do so fully when Christ returns. This joy in the Word – like the fear and love of the Word – should characterize us all. It is not enough simply to listen with the ears and read the Bible at home

Conclusion: