

Pastor Roy's Sermon from July 14, 2019

The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

How have *you* experienced observing the eternal word in your mouth and in your heart? Which is a word from God in your soul. Communion with God. And then finding words to express it to yourself and others. A word from God. The word of God. Friendship with God. Mystery revealed without being dimmed. Perhaps like watching an eclipse with special glasses. Or reading a math, physics or chemistry or biology text that is far, far beyond your comprehension. The wonder is seeing the pages and knowing that someone understands it and that it is amazing. And knowing that it is all related and unified. It is true. That it is true is not a matter of opinion but truth is the degree to which words reflect being or reality. Today it is so easy to find people who agree with us, we can believe anything we want and claim it is true regardless of reality. Claiming something to be true is very different from that thing actually being true. The future of our society and planet depends on people getting this right.

The divine word of truth is not mainly of a spiritual otherworldly nature, it is being and reality. It can reassure. It can cause deep uncertainty. But we can't trifle with what is real. If we begin to understand that what we thought was real is not so real, then we must let it go, or it will consume us with its falseness. A false foundation is a house built on sand. It will collapse. People of faith must side with truth even when it goes against so many other voices. Listening for the word of God takes courage. Once we hear it, we must follow it, practice it, or our house will collapse.

We often expect God's wisdom to help us. How will this word make my life better, richer, fuller, happier? The helpfulness of a word from God is for us and for everyone else. It doesn't have to help us directly. But we expect the word to be effective. We want to know that the word, our faith, will make a difference—that it is relevant. We know that the word from God does not protect us from suffering, but word brings hope in our suffering.

The word is full of mystery and uncertainty. At times the details of the word are downright unclear? At times we don't know how to form the words or how to practice them. Sometimes observing the word in our hearts and on our lips is like driving in the fog or a heavy rain or snow. We slow to a crawl, and fear being rear ended or that we will never get to our destination.

But perhaps it is precisely the times of uncertainty and failure that are the most helpful in our growth in faith. Because in spiritual fog, we have no choice but to trust. We finally despair of all our efforts to make things work. We even despair that God is actually with us.

Yet it doesn't really matter so much what we think—as painful as our thoughts can be—but our passion for listening with honesty and joy will carry us through.

Especially in times of uncertainty and darkness, God's presence, grace, and courage comes to us in a new way. New faith, a new word. This word is not attached to a certain experience we want. We discover new freedom. Not because we have done the right things, or believed the right things, but because we are finally able to give up on our ability to understand and get it right. We give up on all our demands. Then, we are free. Free to rest in the presence of God's word to us, God's word in us, whatever that may be. God with us. God in us.

We continue our journey of faith which is always the gift of God and never beyond our reach. The journey of faith revealed in the Scriptures is a journey of love and grace. Loving God who is gracious in every way, in every moment--to us and to our enemies. Thanks be to God.