

SCRIPTURE'S GREATEST HITS

God's Saying It Makes It So

Genesis 1:1-2:3

June 11, 2023

I want to talk to you about *words*—God's words and our words. God's words create a world. They speak a world into existence. A world full of light and life.

And so, surprisingly, can ours.

Our words can create a world. They can speak a world into existence. Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. Hermione. Hogwarts. This is the world of Harry Potter, and it is the world made possible by the words of J.K. Rowling. She created a world with a young wizard who, on his eleventh birthday, receives a letter of acceptance to Hogwarts School. But more importantly, her words create a world of friendship, adventure, and the struggle between good and evil. The first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, sold in excess of 120 million copies, and it is the third best-selling book of all time.

Yes, our words can create a world. We do it all the time. But human words can also have a double-edged sword.

Our scripture tells us that we are made in the image of God. Listen again.

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.'

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; God blessed them."

Made in the image of God, we know that we have the power to speak—to create words. But we also know the power of words, both psychologically and in a formative way. Our words can both bless and damn. The writer of James adequately captures the power

of the tongue: "With it (the tongue) we bless the Lord our Father, and with it we curse those who are made in his likeness. From the same mouth come blessing and curse." (James 3)

Our words matter. The stories that we hear, the ones that we tell ourselves, matter. They shape us. They inhabit us. They get inside of us. We know the power of words that we speak to ourselves. Words that we speak to others. Words to encourage, to bless, to offer hope in the midst of darkness.

Now, will you imagine with me? Close your eyes (you can do this) and imagine. Picture that teacher, that grandparent, friend, or parent, someone in your life that made a positive difference simply by the words that they spoke to you. Now, hold onto that holy image.

I'll share mine. My grandfather—Pop, as we called him—was a quiet, kind man. He loved life. He loved to read, play golf, and he loved clothes. He was a snappy dresser. Prior to retiring, Pop was a wildcatter in the oil business in Texas, a dangerous and uncertain business. But I think it made him cherish life more. One afternoon as we shared an apple (you get a piece, now I get a piece), he looked at me and said, "Darling, I want you to remember: If you can't do one thing, you can always do another. Never let yourself be or stay discouraged."

I was small with pigtails and a big gap in my teeth, but those words stuck with me. They gave me fight in my belly and courage in times in my life when struggles were real and life was hard. They gave me faith in God.

I challenge you to express your gratitude to that person that you pictured, that teacher, that friend, that parent, that grandparent, the one that you imagined earlier, the one whose words made a difference in your life. I know I thank Pop every day.

Friends, the words that we say matter, and it is our responsibility to choose them wisely, for there are those here today who still sting from words that were said to them, perhaps this morning, last week, or years ago. Words, perhaps, that were not meant to harm, but nonetheless they were words that wounded. If you carry shame, or believe lies about your worth, who God created you to be, from damaging words spoken to you, lay them down. For you are created in the image of God.

Humankind is created in the image of God. Our words have the power to create a world. The words we say matter. Not only do our words reflect the power of God, but they can also be a vessel for God's power and love. God's words shine through us. The power that we have with our words, it reflects that we are created in the image of God. We can be a vessel for good. We can be a vessel for healing.

Listen again to the words Mike spoke this morning from the Assurance of Pardon. "God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are about the earth, so great is God's steadfast love toward those who revere him; as far as the east is from the west, so far God removes our transgressions. Friends, your sins are forgiven."

Mikes saying those words makes it so. Mike is a vessel for God speaking through him. We are forgiven!

Each Sunday we are invited to confess our sins, trusting in the mercy and the goodness of God. We hear words of grace. We hear words of love. Words that we are forgiven. Words that allow us to forgive ourselves. These are God's words, and they make us new!

Now let's talk about *God's words*.

God saying it makes it so. God saying it is good makes it good. Very Good.

God's words reveal the glory of God which takes us up out of ourselves and makes us new. Makes us likeable. God's words create a world. They speak our world into existence, a world full of light and life. And in our world, we can see the glory of God.

Look around you. We can see the glory of God in long summer evenings. In grass lush with that perfect shade of early summer green. We can see the glory of God in the fragrance of flowers. We have seen the glory of God in the music given to us by the bell choir this morning, and we have seen the glory of God in the children on the steps who had the right answers. We even have seen the glory of God this week in this sanctuary and in the chapel as we conducted funeral services in celebration of life and in our hope in the resurrection. We have seen God's glory in family and friends showing up.

The very goodness of it all. The beauty of those we love, the sound of their voices, the light in their eyes, the joy of our students right now exploring their faith in Samos, on Footsteps of Faith. These all belong to the world that God spoke and continues to speak into existence. These all show that God's creation, they show us that it is good. Very good.

But there are still times for me, and I am sure for you, where it is hard to see God's glory, and that is when we need to remember those words that made a difference in our lives. If we can't see the glory of God in one place, look for it again in another. And as my Pop said to me: "Never let yourself be or stay discouraged."

For God made it all good. Very good. Behold the glory of God.

Amen.