

**State College Presbyterian Church
Rev. Dr. Charles Curley
October 18, 2009**

**“And God said. . .
And it was so. . .”
from Genesis 1:24**

**Genesis 1:20-31
Isaiah 55:1-11**

God speaks; and it is.

God says a word and it happens just as God said.

God does by speaking.

God makes by speaking.

By speaking, God creates.

We too can create, but it is really a refashioning of what is already here.

The stuff we work with when we create is already here.

The astounding proclamation in the Book of Beginnings is that God only has to speak -- and it is done.

On the most primitive level it sounds like God says, "creeping things" and things begin to creep over the face of the earth.

Throughout the Bible, it is astonishing how many of the acts of God have to do with speaking, and hearing.

When the prophets stand up in the crowd, their prophecy begins with "Hear."

"Hear the word of your God."

For the prophets themselves, hearing what God has to say is far more important than what they may see in their individual visions.

In fact, the visions are only important, if they can be spoken, and heard by others.

The richness of the Hebrew and Greek words for “speaking” and for the “word” are lost on our English trained ears.

When we think of word, we think of some ink frozen on a page. Our reverence for the physical book gives an unfortunate impression that the book was always here.

And yet with the exception of the letters in the New Testament (and even they were meant to be read aloud to the community of believers). None of this was originally meant to be written down.

All these words that are frozen on the page came from tongues and mouths’ struggling with what was happening at the time.

These words were meant to burn the ears of the listeners, to still their anxieties in captivity, to exhort them to greater deeds, to witness to salvation -- all in all -- spoken words to reflect the speaking of God.

A terrible thing happened to our response to God when the Bible was written down as the Law, as in the Law and the Prophets.

The Law sounds so once and for all -- so solid -- so immovable.

It is difficult to think of God moving among us when we have to deal with the Law.

How much better if the original intent of “Torah/Law” had been kept -- the teachings -- or, even better, the speaking, or even better, the doings of God.

For the God who calls us is a speaking God, and he needs us to hear his doings.

As God said through Isaiah: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return until they have watered the earth, making it blossom and bear fruit, and give seed for sowing and bread to eat, so shall the word which comes from my mouth prevail; it shall not return to me fruitless without accomplishing my purpose or succeeding in the task I have set it. (Isaiah 55:10-11)

God does what God does by speaking God’s word.

And when God speaks, God demands some kind of response.

In order to understand what is so important about God speaking and what it means, we would do well to look at our own patterns of speaking and what speaking involves for us.

Since we are in the "image of God" there are some analogies that can be made.

What do we do when we speak?

Speaking is not something we do that is independent from the rest of us.

We don't say words and nothing else is happening to us.

Speech is what comes out when something else is happening to us.

If you are walking alone, and you see a person step into the street, and doesn't see the car coming, you yell, "Watch out!"

The "Watch out" comes out of the hands fending off the danger.

The sound bursts out of the fear and anxiety.

The body is doing all kinds of things; the stomach and blood are doing strange jumps, and the words are the last to show.

The words we use are to reveal – they're a code we understand -- for certain events.

"Watch out" is our sound for danger.

But words also condition how we feel. The way you say a word affects what it will mean.

One exercise is to take a key word. Let us say, "Christ is the **Hope** of the World."

Now, if you say "hope" with little mouth --"hope", what is the person to think about your Christian hope?

But what if you play with the word?

HOOOOOOOO PPPP HOPE.

Try it sometime. Feel the word in your mouth.

Hope never can be the same again. It's very therapeutic isn't it? You are trying to create a response-to tell the person what to respond to.

So . . . to speak is to make sounds to express what has happened to us.

And the sounds become important, because the words we form clue the person in to what is happening.

But there is more involved.

Unless we are talking to ourselves, our speech demands some **response** from the one to whom we are speaking.

Through our words, we reveal our intent, our mood, and our wills.

Let us take the most potent of sentences – “I love you.”

Something has already happened to us -- the words reveal part of our intent to the other person, certainly our mood, and what we are wishing to do with that person.

Something has happened, and we are revealing it through our words, "I Love You."

Certainly, such potent words demand some kind of response.

When we speak we are asking the person to do something in return.

What they are to do, can take many forms. "I love you to" is best response we can hear.

It means: “I know where you are at, and that's where I am too.”

A smile, an adoring glance, body language helps. At least she appreciates my condition.

But when you say those words, you open yourself up to all kinds of responses.

What could be more crushing than? . . . “I love you." "Oh, well, that's nice."

We also use words to reveal who a person is.

Who you and I are is revealed through speaking.

It is daring, risky to reveal ourselves.

And it demands some kind of response from the other.

Sometimes, when you introduce me to someone who doesn't know me it goes: "So and so, this is Chuck Curley."

Little reaction, no response, until. . . . “He's our minister."

Then one of two things invariably happens:

Either, “Well, hello! You must know my pastor, so and so.”

Or, the other thing that happens often is they start frantically looking around for someone else to talk to.

But there is a **response** when who I am is revealed.

All of our speaking comes out of who we are.

Our names, what we do, who we are. That is the reason everyone is frightened when they have to speak in public.

So much is exposed. When you or I are speaking, we are revealing our private persons. And all that was private now becomes public. That is why public prayers are so difficult - the privacy is invaded. And that is why praying in the community of believers is so important -- it is a sign and seal of trust.

The examples that have been given are all things everyone knows, but they are important to bring out in the open. They are also fitting examples for what the Bible is trying to say when it tells about God speaking and about God's Word being revealed.

What we understand about our own speaking is what is meant by God speaking to us.

In the Book of the Beginnings, when it is written, "And God said. . . and it was so" it is like our speaking.

God's words reveal what is already happening.

The creation is the intent, the will, the mood of God.

What we see around us, the creation churning, changing, evolving new life, dying and rising again, result from his Word. . . from God saying it was so and it is.

What happens in the New Testament is even more astounding.

The conviction of all the New Covenant is that the life, teachings, actions and death of Jesus is a new word from God.

It is a different kind of word than the ones the prophets heard.

It is so different in kind, that even our calendar is dated by the event.

There was the time that came before Jesus, and that which comes after.

"When all things began, the Word was at the creation. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was (of course, it comes out of God). The Word then, was with God at the beginning."

But then, it says, "The Word, the speaking of God, took on flesh, he dwelt among us, and we saw his glory. . . ."

" A new word. A new sign. A new voice of God. "

As when we are bursting to express some danger or care, sounds come out, so the care and concern of God comes out -- not in our kinds of words, but in the order and boundaries of the universe, in lights being put in the vault of heaven, in the creeping things and all the living creatures.

And then, in God's good time, the great new word that came out of God was a living, moving man, Jesus.

Again like our speaking, if we are trying to communicate with another, a response is demanded.

The common refrain in the Bible is, "You have heard, now go and do."

From Isaiah when he heard the lament of God -- "Whom shall I send."

And Isaiah's response is "Here am I, send me."

From Isaiah, to Jesus talking with the trained theologian about who is a neighbor.

"And which one proved to be the neighbor?"

The Samaritan. "Go and do likewise."

People become very frustrated with the Bible because there is no great outline or theory of ethics -- there is no system.

Some of the Psalmists rejoice over the death of their enemies, and others reach out to them.

And, there is a good reason why there is no set of ethics -- of doing right.

What is right is obeying the voice -- responding to what happens to us in the here and now, in our history.

In the Old Testament, the call says, "I saved you from the hands of Egypt and brought you to your own land. What should you do to give thanks?"

"I promised your father Abraham that he would be a great nation. What should you do?"

"In short, I loved you like my own child, Israel."

That demands some kind of response, right?

The voice of God is very clear in the Old Testament: I have loved you, you have seen in your history and what I demand, the response I demand is that you love me too.

"Hear, O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your life, and with all your might."

In the New Testament, it comes out the same. I saved you from no life and have brought you into a new life through Jesus the Promised One.

Look at what my Word has become -- a living man, testified to in your history. I loved you that much.

Now, what should we do?

There is God speaking.

God says, I love you.

What will we respond: "Oh, well, that's nice, God."

That is not a response!

There is only one response God wants from us.

God wants us to do: "I love you Lord."

Yes, you heard right. I said do!

Do it!

Saying "I love you to God" always includes doing that love.

Doing comes from our speaking just as creation came from the voice of God.

Speaking without doing is no response to our Creator.

How do we “do” love to God?

Christians have a word for how we do love.

That word is “mission.”

Mission is how we do love.

Mission is not just for missionaries – it is for everyone to love God.

Mission is not just far away – it is right here, where we are.

Mission is doing God’s love.

Mission is love in action!

Love in action in response to the love God speaks, and does, and gives to you.

You can do it!

Yes you can!

Amen