

Psalm 119 is a longish Psalm of 176 verses, weaving together words of lament, trust, petition, and exuberant joy. The structure of the psalm reinforces its theological content, "God's revelatory instruction – is pervasive and all encompassing."

Our meditation this evening is on Psalm 119:97-104, to hear the word of God! To meditate on God's revelation, God's teaching, yields the highest wisdom! To be wiser than our enemies, enemies being the arrogant folks who place their confidence in worldly wisdom. More insight than our merely human teachers, more understanding than the elderly who are taught by experience.

In these verses, and even more so in the entire Psalm, God's *Torah* or instruction is a way of life, an approach that brings one closer to God. The teachings of God are not arbitrary rules and regulations designed to make humanity miserable, quite the contrary, they are for the good of all people. These verses illustrate a way of living as God's people.

Martin Luther once wrote that there is "Nothing more beautiful in the eyes of God than a soul that loves to hear his Word." He noted along the way that if one wants to become a theologian, one must not only pray but practice meditation. By meditation, he meant studying and contemplating scripture. He wrote:

"You should meditate. This means that not only in your heart but also externally you should constantly handle and compare, read and reread the Word as preached and the very words as written in Scripture, diligently noting and meditating on what the Holy Spirit means. Moreover, be careful that you do not become surfeited and get the notion that, having read, heard, and repeated it once or twice, you have done enough and understand everything completely."

Luther himself read the Bible through twice yearly and used Scripture in his daily devotions and with his children. To read the Bible effectively, Luther said, you will look for Christ in its pages.

Now in his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote:

"So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17) Reading scripture is an integral part of our worship services, nearly every Sunday we hear an OT lesson, we read a Psalm together, we hear a reading from an Epistle, we hear a reading from one of the gospels, and we have a sermon. Now here's what it says about preaching in a statement on Word and Sacrament called *The Use of the Means of Grace*, published by the ELCA.

"The preaching of the Gospel of the crucified and risen Christ is rooted in the readings of the Scriptures in the assemblies for worship. Called and ordained ministers bear responsibility for the preached Word in the Church gathered for public worship." (Principle 9)

It further states that “Preaching is the living and contemporary voice of one who interprets in all the Scriptures the things concerning Jesus Christ. In fidelity to the readings appointed for the day, the preacher proclaims our need of God’s grace and freely offers that grace, equipping the community for mission and service in daily life.” (Application 9A)

So through the commandments we gain understanding, therefore we hate every lying way. Here we are speaking of the Ten Commandments, and the commandments that come from our Lord Jesus. You’ve heard many times the primary commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might”, and the second which is like it. Jesus said: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” And of course you’ve also heard many times the new commandment given us by Christ: “Love one another as I have loved you, by this they will know you are my disciples, that you love one another.” Now if you could actually do these latter three commandments and never break them, you would find that you are living the Ten Commandments as well.

Now here’s the take home for this evening. We know we are saved by grace through faith, faith in Christ crucified, not in the keeping of the law. However, knowing we are saved by grace through faith, we want to live by God’s precepts showing gratitude to God in the way we live our lives, witnessing to God’s grace in and through our lives. Understanding this, we do our best to live as God’s people, in this community of faith.

AMEN