

Kirby Lawrence Hill

Abington Presbyterian Church

August 16, 2020

Psalm 119:105-112

James 1:17-25

A VIBRANT FAITH: LOGOS

It is good to be back with you after I had some shore leave, so to speak. We were with extended family after all got tested for COVID-19 ahead of time, so it was great to isolate ourselves with loved ones in a large house in a beautiful place where we had little to no other direct contact with others for a week. At the beach house where we were staying, the storm named Isaias impacted us in limited ways on Monday night and Tuesday morning. The storm frankly had a greater impact in the Philadelphia area than where we were staying. But there were wind gusts that I would estimate at 50 miles per hour for a period of time. Early on Tuesday morning, while the wind was blowing, my brother-in-law went out to the edge of the deck to check out the effects of the storm. He is someone who wears glasses and needs them to be able to see clearly. While he was outside, the wind blew his glasses off and they fell beyond the deck down into the sand below. He went down to look for them, but the sands were shifting in the wind and covered up his glasses. He did not find them. Others searched as well. We were beginning to wonder what adjustments he would need to make with this new situation where he had such limited vision. So, the news was received with great joy when our niece found his glasses unbroken, unscratched down in the sand later that morning.

I sort of feel like we, as people of faith, had a way that we had settled into of viewing things pre-COVID-19, but that the winds of the pandemic have knocked off our glasses that in the past had helped us to see things somewhat more clearly. Now, it has become harder to envision our way forward when we cannot yet gather together physically with those who have served as our community of faith. These are times when jobs and health and government and life as we have known them are all a bit shaky. With a lot of unknowns about what lies before us, it is a time when many of us as people of faith are feeling challenged like seldom before.

This sermon today begins a series of four sermons where I invite you to explore with me key concepts that can serve as lenses for us to use to try to see our way moving forward, stepping out in faith during the current winds of great change. The title of the series is 'A Vibrant Faith,' which is what we want in ordinary times, but what we certainly need in these extraordinary times. The New Testament was originally written in Greek, and each week of this series, we will be looking at, even looking through a key concept found in a faith-foundational word from scripture. Today, the word is logos. I could actually flip that sentence and say that in the Greek language, logos is the word. That's what logos means: word.

The concept of word or logos in scripture generally refers to a word that comes from God. We are reminded of the power of God's word in the poetic creation story at the beginning of Genesis where creation, including humanity, comes about through God's utterances. We begin to understand that God speaks powerfully, in life-giving ways. As we continue moving through the story told in scripture, we hear time and again how God's word is communicated in a variety of ways. We are repeatedly told that God wants to engage humanity in a loving, covenantal relationship. The invitation for us to have an identity as God's people is graciously offered. God's word comes to various individuals calling them to specific tasks that lead to liberation or it is an offering of direction, guidance, and meaning that seeks the best for all involved. God's revealed word is received also as that which is inspirational in nature, lifting us to the higher plane. The passage we heard from Psalm 119 expresses deep love for God's word as it comes to us, delighting that it provides us with all kinds of gifts for ourselves and the possibility of enrichment for an experience of a beloved community. That word offers a way for us to be touched by and connected to God's redemptive activity in the world, as we become a part of something so much larger than ourselves. When humanity had difficulty receiving God's word, that logos came in human form, God's word became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. God's logos expressed through Jesus challenges us to not just receive, to not just believe God's word, but to allow this living logos to shape us and enliven us into growing in our love for God and neighbor.

The passage from the book of James helps us to know that the logos that comes from God enables us to recognize what is good and true. It is to be implanted in our

lives so its saving power can have full effect, first on us, and then on others, as we become not just hearers of the word, but doers of the word. We are invited to receive God's logos not just with our ears, with our brains, with our hearts, but also in the structuring of our priorities and activities.

In addition to meaning word, logos in the Greek language also can mean reason. God gives us the gift of rationality to aid us in our interpreting of God's word as it comes to us, applying it to our particular context. We seek together as a community of faith to discern God's guidance as it comes to us through scripture, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. That is why we as your pastoral staff lift up scripture in sermons week by week instead of just relying on the pithiest of our own thoughts and inclinations. With God's life-giving power, words originally written down two to three thousand years ago, in very different settings, are dynamic still. This logos brings a vibrancy to our faith and lives as we grow in understanding and wisdom and guidance and hope that is wholly relevant for our times.

At the ocean, when the winds increase, the waves grow in their power as they break on shore. When the winds of change increase around us, the power of God's logos can grow in our lives, as God's love message rolls in even more vigorously. The logos comes in waves, always to buoy us, never to take us under. We hear of God's gracious and kind presence with us through thick and thin. We are told of creative, redemptive, and sustaining love which is poured out for us and poured into us so we can grow in our love for others. The message implores us not to be afraid, and it tells us of the coming of God's own Spirit, who helps us be at peace even in the most turbulent times. God's ways of compassion, God's commitment to what is just and right offers hope far and wide. This word from above reminds us of God's capacity and craving to use flawed human beings like you and me in Godly work that shares the uplifting logos with a world that desperately needs it.

I have offered you this day just a thimbleful of the depths of the ocean of meaning and inspiration found in God's logos. A great thing is that you don't have to depend just upon pastoral staff to pass on to you the immense gift of God's word. Receive it, believe it, allow it to shape and enliven you and your faith for these extraordinary times. There are additional gifts from God that we will be exploring in coming

weeks. All praise, honor and glory be unto our gracious, loving God, who spoke on the first day of creation, who spoke through the person of Jesus Christ, who spoke through the coming of the Spirit, who speaks still. Amen.