

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

As many of you know, I lost my **glasses** a few weeks ago. I have **new** ones now, although my eyes are still **adjusting** to them. Ellen and I looked **all over** for the old ones - inside and out - at home and at church - multiple times - but there has still been absolutely **no trace** of them anywhere. I wonder where they are, since they seem to have completely **vanished** into thin air. It's not the **first** time I have **misplaced** my glasses, or keys, or cellphone, or coffee cup. However, most of the time whatever it is I have **misplaced** is right in front of my nose, in **plain sight**. I'm pretty sure I'm not the **only one** who has this problem, and maybe this rather **common** plight can illustrate a point for us today. When people are trying to find **God**, or are striving to become people who **please** Him, they tend to do the same thing - they look **everywhere**. In fact, many times they will travel hundreds of miles to attend **seminars**, and they will read **book** after **book** written by popular **authors**, when all along our God is always **with us**. He's **right here** - in **plain sight**. Our God - the one **true** God - is found in His **Word**, and **The Word Is Near**. That fact can be taken **2 ways**, because **God's printed Word** is near, but the **Word made flesh** is also near; and **both** of them need to be in our **hearts** to **believe**, and in our **mouths** to **share**.

In our text for today **Moses**, the spiritual leader of Israel, looked into the **future**. And as he did so, he saw a day when God would bring **blessings** to His people who had turned their hearts to Him. He told of a time when people would **love** the LORD, and would **obey** Him, and would **keep** His commandments. God would be **pleased** with them, and would **bless** them and cause them to **prosper**. But after traveling around in circles in the wilderness for the past 40 years, God's people had their **doubts**. Their lives had been **difficult** and **dangerous**, and it had been **hard** for them to continue to **love** the LORD. They had **fallen away** from Him again and again in the **past**, so why should anything be different **now**? They thought that **following** the LORD might be **too difficult** for them, and **obeying** the LORD might be **beyond** their reach. So Moses told them, "*What I am commanding you today is **not** too difficult for you or **beyond** your reach. It is not up in **heaven** so that you have to ask, 'Who will **ascend** into heaven to **get** it and **proclaim** it to us so we may **obey** it?' Nor is it beyond the **sea**, so that you have to ask, 'Who will **cross** the sea to **get** it and **proclaim** it to us so we may **obey** it?'"* Moses was telling God's people that their **salvation** and ability to live a God-pleasing life was **not** beyond their reach. They needed to understand that their salvation was **not** a matter of **doing** and **earning**. It was a matter of **receiving**, because God had graciously provided it **for** them.

Moses hit on a human trait in the **Israelites** which is common to **us** as well. What God has made **nearby** and **accessible**, we tend to make **far away** and **difficult**. How does the **world** view salvation? It doesn't come from **Bethlehem** or from a **cross** and **empty tomb** in **Jerusalem**, but rather it's somewhere way out there in the **clouds** - far, far away. It's in a place where we will need to build a **stairway** of **good works** in order to get there. And that's **not** going to be **easy**- in fact it's going to be **impossible**. The Bible tells us that by the works of the law **no one** is justified. If we try to obtain salvation through **our** works and merits, it will always be **out of reach**. But our God tells us that earning salvation is only impossibly **difficult** for **us** - **not** for **Him**. He **earned** it, and He freely **gave** it to us, through His Son, Jesus.

It's **sin** which causes us to look **inward** instead of **outward**. Sin makes a real **mess** of us. It fills us with **pride** and **prejudice** and **selective** caring. It has us trying to be **heroes** who do great things to **earn** God's favor. Sin turns the **tables** on God so that instead of admitting how far short **we** are of His glory, and how far **we** have fallen from His grace, we lament how far **He** is from **us**, and how **vague** and **fuzzy** He has become in our minds.

But the words which God gave us through Moses are still true. *"What I am commanding you is **not** difficult or **beyond** your reach."* If God is **distant**, it's only because **we** have **walked away** from Him. If living with love is **beyond** us it's because **we** haven't been **following** His Word. **We** take what was near and easy, and we make it distant and difficult. Our **sins** have separated us so far from God that it is **impossible** for us to bridge the **gap** and **please** Him. And if that situation would **remain**, we would be sent away from Him **eternally**.

But what we have made **distant** and **difficult** God has made **near** and **easy**. God has **intervened** for us, and has drawn **near** to us, and has **provided** a **Savior** for us, so we can be **His** people - people who live for **His** glory. Moses said, *"What I am commanding you is not too **difficult** for you or **beyond** your reach ... No, the word is very **near** you; it is in your **mouth** and in your **heart** so you may obey it."* It's not too **difficult** for us, and it is **near** us, because our gracious God has made it **easy** for us to be His people. He did it **for** us.

Moses told the Israelites, *"The word is **near** you,"* and indeed God had blessed Israel with **Moses** and other **prophets** who **spoke** God's Word to them - and in the case of Moses, who actually **wrote down** God's Word for them. They had the first 5 books of God's **printed** Word - the **Torah** - which pointed out their **sins**, and their need for a **Savior**. They put their **trust** in a **promised** Savior who

would come at some time in the **future**, and in due time, God **fulfilled** His promise, and **provided** that Savior by sending His Son, Jesus, to the earth. The writer to the Hebrews tells us, *“In the **past** God spoke to our forefathers through the **prophets** at many times and in various ways. But in these **last** days God has spoken to us by **his Son**.”* The **Word** became **flesh**.

Through His Son, Jesus, God has made it **easy** to be His people who live for Him. God didn't put our salvation far away in the **clouds**, but He brought it down to us right **here** on earth. Jesus **came** to us, He carried our sins to the **cross**, He **healed** us by His wounds, and He saw to it that we are God's **children** for all eternity. God didn't put our salvation on the other side of the **ocean**, but rather, He put it **right here** in front of our noses, when He put His Word into the waters of **Holy Baptism**, and in the bread and wine of **Holy Communion**.

Dear friends, we **have** that precious Word of God, and we **believe** it in our hearts. Week after week it's **preached** to us, it's **taught** in our Bible Classes, and it's regularly offered to us in the **Lord's Supper**. That Word of God brings us **forgiveness** and **salvation**, and it enables us to live lives of service - to **God** and to **one another**. That Word of God turns our **hearts** to Him - to **love** Him and carry out His **will**. That Word **purifies** our lips and **cleanses** our hearts, as it announces **forgiveness** for **all** our sins through the sacrifice of **Jesus** on the cross. And that Word of our merciful God causes our hearts to **burn** within us - to burn with a deep desire to **love** the Lord, to **obey** His commandments, and to use our mouths to **share** that message with **everyone**.

As we walk through this life, we don't want to have our heads in the **clouds** - **dreaming** about how things **could** be or **should** be in life. But rather, we want to have our ears to the **ground** - actively **listening** for calls for help from those who need **forgiveness** - from those who are **wounded**, **hurt**, or **lonely** - because these are opportunities for us to **share our Savior** with them - and to bring them the **comfort** and **peace** which can only be found in God's Word.

God has blessed us so **richly** with His Word - it **saturates** our lives. **The Word Is Near**, so it can be an active part of our lives throughout the day. **The Word Is Near**, so it can easily be preached, and taught, and read, and shared. Our gracious God has planted His Word in us, giving us hearts to **believe**, and mouths to **confess**. So, may we continue to **rejoice** in our God and His Word. And may we **also** rejoice that He gives us the **opportunities**, and the **ability** to **share** Him and His Word with others. Amen.