

What makes something valuable? Is it how much you spend on it that makes it valuable? Is it how much that it means to you that makes it valuable? Whatever it might be, there's one thing that certainly makes something valuable, and that is how long it lasts. Because if it doesn't last very long, it doesn't matter how much you spent on it. It's not going to be worth very much. Because if you bring it home and it breaks right away, you're going to call it a pile of junk and say that "I want my money back." It's no use to us if it's not worth anything.

But Christians, the things of this world may seem like they last a long time. But honestly, how long do they really last? Because think about the things you spend your money on, even the very expensive things. A thing like a house, for example, we spend a lot of money on it, but it doesn't last all that long. Because you're eventually going to sell it, or it's going to be destroyed in some accident. Or when it comes to something like a vehicle, it doesn't matter how much you fix it up and try to keep it going. Eventually you'll have to sell it, or you'll have to get rid of it. Put it out in the junkyard, because it isn't much use anymore. And even the things that have sentimental value to us, things like heirlooms, the things we want to hold onto, they don't really last either, do they? Because they might be lost. They might be destroyed. Or you just might not value them that much after all. Yes, the things of this world, Christians, really aren't worth that much, because they too will come to nothing.

But Christians, there is one thing in the world that we never consider to be very valuable, and that is words. Words are cheap, we say. We use thousands of them every single day. Words don't last very long. As soon as I say it, it disappears. It's not like you can grab the word out of the air and go take it home with you. No, it's something that disappears as soon as it reaches your ear. And words are something that are often empty, because people will say one thing and do another. That's why we want something to prove that people mean what they say. We say things like "talk is cheap." We say things like "actions speak louder than words." We say things like "don't just tell it to me. Show it to me!" Because we want to know whether what you're saying is true. It's also why we write things down. Because if you put it down on paper, we think that that means something more than if we just say it. It's why a signature is often worth more than just a verbal agreement. Yes, Christians, words are often just words. And for that reason, we may not think they're worth very much at all.

But when we think that way about words, Christians, that can lead us to struggle with God's promises, with the things that he says to us. Because God makes all of his promises to us with words, and only with words. And that can leave us wondering, "Well, how do we know that God is going to do what he says? How do we know that these aren't just words?" Because there's certainly times in our lives when we need to know that God is going to do what he says.

Take, for example, when we are facing hard times. Facing a drought, for example, or poverty, or even sickness. And we hear God say something like, "Don't worry. Don't worry about tomorrow. I'm going to take care of you, because you are worth more to me than many sparrows." Maybe we say, "But, are those just words, God? How do we know that you are going to do what you say you're going to do?" Or when we are facing suffering as a Christian--we lose our job because of our beliefs or we face the hatred of the world because we belong to Jesus--and we hear God say something like, "Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." But that leads

us to say, "Are those just words, God? How do we know that you will do what you say?" Or Christians, when we are facing the most distressing point of our lives, for all of us, when we are facing eternity, facing death and the grave, either for someone else, but especially for ourselves, and we hear Jesus say to us, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die," that leaves us wondering, "Are those just words, Lord? How do we know that you're going to do what you say?" We want something to give us comfort. We want something to give us assurance, so that we know that what God says to us are not just empty words.

But Christians, God will do what he says he's going to do. God's words are not empty words. God's Word is not just words, because he is faithful and true. And this is why God compares his word to rain and to snow, as we hear from our reading in Isaiah, starting at verse 10: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." God compares his Word to rain and to snow, because rain and snow seem like something that doesn't last very long at all. The storm will blow through quickly, and it seems to just go right by. And even the rain that does fall seems to go right into the ground and disappear. If we were looking at it without knowing anything else, we would think that rain is the most useless thing in the world, because it's just gone as soon as it's here. But we know from our experiences, we know from our lives how much rain is truly worth. Because even if it seems to disappear, even if it seems to just go away as quickly as it comes, we know that it goes into the ground to give us a harvest. And we know the value of even a little bit of rain when it comes to giving us a harvest at the end of the year.

And Christians, God's Word is the same way. Because even if we can't see how it works right now, even if we can't understand how it's going to do anything right now, God's Word cannot fail, because God is faithful to his promises. God will do what he says. In hard times, he will comfort you, just as he says. In times of suffering, he will uphold you, just as he says. In the time of death, he will give us life, just as he says. Because God does what he says, Christians, and God is faithful to his Word.

And we know this above all in our Lord Jesus Christ. Because Jesus who is the Word has risen from the dead, just as he said. And I'm sure to his disciples every time he said that, it seemed like just words. How could that ever possibly happen? But it has happened. Jesus is alive! And because he is alive, we know that he will do everything which he says he's going to do. God is faithful, and his words are not just words. They are the words of life and truth.

So Christians, hold on to those words. Hold on to them, because they are everlasting. Heaven and earth and everything we see around us will disappear, but the words of God will never disappear. They will go on forever. Because God's Word is worth more to us than gold, even much fine gold, because they are not just words. They are his words, and he will do what he says.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, you have given us your Word, and you will keep your promises, as you have shown us in your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us always to trust in you and to hold onto that Word, because it is our life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.