

**TEXT: You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.**

Dear Friends in Christ,

All week long the children have been diving into the pool of God's Word and finding treasures that will be a blessing to them for all eternity.

The people that Jesus was talking to in our text were also diving into God's Word. But as we can see from Jesus' words they were studying that Word with the wrong purpose. Jesus' words help us to continue doing what we have begun in God's Word, but with the right reason. Jesus teaches us to:

**Dive into God's Word for the right reason**

1. Not to earn your salvation
2. But to find Jesus, your salvation.

Jesus was talking to the Jews there in the city of Jerusalem right after he had healed a man at the pool of Bethesda who had been an invalid for 38 years. It was a tremendous miracle that showed that he was the true Son of God, but the problem the Jews saw was that this miracle was performed on the Sabbath. Jesus had told this man to get up and take his mat and walk. To the Jews this was a breaking of the Sabbath. They taught that you were not to work on the Sabbath. Carrying your mat, apparently, fell into the realm of work. So they accused this man of breaking the Sabbath and began persecuting him. In his defense the man said, "**The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'**" So they asked, "**Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?**" The healed invalid didn't know that it was Jesus, but later that day Jesus found him in the temple. Then the man knew that it was Jesus who had healed him. After that, probably to save his own neck, the man reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. That shifted the persecution away from the healed invalid and brought it on Jesus (John 5:12-15).

The words of our text are part of Jesus' reply to the Jews who were persecuting him because he had told the healed invalid to take up his mat and walk. From Jesus' own words two things are very clear. First, they knew the Scriptures. Jesus said, "**You diligently study the Scriptures...**" But, secondly, their purpose in diligently studying the Scriptures was "**because you think that by them you possess eternal life.**" The rabbis did make a mechanical use of the letter of Scripture as a means of salvation. They thought that the more they studied the Scriptures the more likely they would be saved. In other words, they believed in work righteousness, that is, if they did good works they could be righteous, right, before God. So they depended on their own good deeds to earn salvation.

Do we think that way sometimes too? Do we think, if I go to church and Sunday School, if I help the poor, if I read my Bible at home and say my prayers, if I am kind and do good deeds for other people, I will be saved? Many people think that way today. Many churches teach that today, just as the Scribes and Pharisees taught that in Jesus day. Because they think that they can save themselves by doing good works they diligently study the Bible to find more good things to do to please God so that they can save themselves.

There's a problem when we use the Bible for the wrong purpose. The Bible itself tells us it's impossible to earn salvation by doing good works (Ephesians 2:8,9). The Bible tells us "to **be holy, like the Lord our God is holy.**" God demands that we be holy, without sin. No matter how good a life we live we can never be holy like God, that is, perfect. And the Bible itself testifies that "**all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.**" And "**the wages of sin is death,**" eternal death. We can only save ourselves if we have lived a perfect life. No one can do that. Therefore, on our own and depending only on our own works we are doomed! The mirror of God's Word makes us conscious of our sins; it shows us our sins. It warns us of the consequences of our sins so that we will search for salvation.

God certainly wants us to live a good life, but not to earn salvation, rather, to thank him for the gift of salvation which he freely gives us in his Son, Jesus Christ. God wants us to search the Scriptures so that we will find our Savior there. That is what we were doing in VBS all week.

Jesus tells us that this is the proper use of Scripture when he says, "**These are the Scriptures that testify about me.**" All of the Bible tells the story of how "**God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.**" All of Scripture centers on Jesus, testifies of Jesus and his work. Why? Because through faith in Jesus we are saved. Because Jesus saved us, we have a proper motivation to live a good life. "**We love, because he first loved us.**" Our life of good works is a thank you to Jesus for saving us from our sins. So we diligently search the Scriptures to learn more about Jesus and His heavenly Father's love for us. That love, God's love for us in Christ, is the fuel that stokes the fire of our love for God and our neighbor.

This past week in VBS we were totally focused on Jesus and God's love for us. The Bible stories we learned taught it. The songs we sang sung it. The art projects focused our eyes on the salvation God has freely given us in Christ. If the children believe in these truths they will indeed go to heaven someday.

We invite them and their parents to continue to Search the Scriptures here at Our Savior Lutheran Church. For there are still many treasures to be found in the pool of God's Word, treasures which God put there for us to find, treasures that will make us happy here on earth and fill us with joy and hope as we wait for the day Jesus brings us to our heavenly mansion. Join us in searching the Scriptures for the right reason, for finding Christ Jesus. Amen.

BGT John 5:39 **evrauna/te ta.j grafa,j( o[ti u`mei/j dokei/te evn aurtai/j zwh.n aivw,nion e;cein\ kai. evkei/nai, eivsin ai` marturou/sai peri. evmou/\**

**evrauna/te evrauna,w** vipa--2p/vmpa--2p (verb indicative present active 2nd person plural OR verb imperative present active 2nd person plural )

**ta.j o`** dafp (definite article accusative feminine plural )

**grafa,j( grafh,** n-af-p (noun accusative feminine plural )

**o[ti o[ti** cs (conjunction subordinate )

**u`mei/j su,** npn-2p (noun pronoun nominative 2nd person plural )

**dokei/te doke,w** vipa--2p (verb indicative present active 2nd person plural )

**evn evn** pd (preposition dative )

**aurtai/j aurtu,j** npdf3p (noun pronoun dative feminine 3rd person plural )

**zwh.n zwh,** n-af-s (noun accusative feminine singular )

**aivw,nion aivw,nioj** a--af-s (adjective accusative feminine singular )

**e;cein\ e;cw** vnpa (verb infinitive present active )

**kai. kai,** cc (conjunction coordinate )

**evkei/nai, evkei/noj** apdnf-p (adjective pronoun demonstrative nominative feminine plural )

**eivsin eivmi,** vipa--3p (verb indicative present active 3rd person plural )

**ai` o`** dnfp+ (definite article nominative feminine plural (see context) )

**marturou/sai marture,w** vppanf-p (verb participle present active nominative feminine plural )

**peri. peri,** pg (preposition genitive )

**evmou/\ evgw,** npg-1s (noun pronoun genitive 1st person singular )

**evrauna,w** (and **evreuna,w**) 1aor. **hvrau,nhsa** and **evreu,nhsa**; (1) **as making a thorough investigation try to find out, search, examine** (JN 5.39); (2) of the Spirit's investigation *search (deeply), fathom* (1C 2.10)

**doke,w** impf. **evdo,koun**; fut. **do,xw**; 1aor. **e;doxa**; (1) transitively, of subjective opinion **think, presume, suppose** (MT 6.7); often followed by an infinitive translated as a finite verb (1C 3.18); *choose, be disposed to* (1C 11.16); (2) intransitively *seem, have the appearance, appear* (AC 17.18); of having a reputation for something *be recognized as, count for, be regarded as* (GA 2.6); (3) impersonally **dokei/ moi** *it seems to me, I think*; used with the dative of person and an infinitive to express one's will or pleasure *it seems best or good, decide* (LU 1.3)

**zwh,** h/j, h` life; (1) physical **life** (RO 8.38), opposite **qa,natoj** (*death*); (2) supernatural *life*, opposite **to. qnhto,n** (*what is subject to dying*) and **fqora,** (*destruction, death*), **received by believers as a gift from God** (JN 3.36; 1J 5.11), experienced both now (RO 6.4) and eternally (MK 10.30); (3) viewed as an attribute of God (1J 5.20) and Christ (JN 5.26b)

**aivw,nioj, on** (sometimes **oj, i,a, on**) eternal, everlasting, opposite **pro,skairoj** (*temporary, transitory*); (1) of God *without beginning or end, eternal* (RO 16.26); (2) *without beginning* (RO 16.25); (3) **without end, everlasting** (2C 5.1); (4) neuter singular **aivw,nion** as an adverb *for all time, forever* (PM 15)

**marture,w** impf. **evmartu,roun**; fut. **marturh,sw**; 1aor. **evmartu,rhsa**; pf. **memartu,rhka**; pf. pass. **memartu,rhmai**; 1aor. pass. **evmarturh,qhn**; used of the activity of a **ma,rtuj** (*witness*); (1) of a human

declaration of ascertainable facts based on firsthand knowledge or experience *bear witness to, declare, confirm* (RO 10.2); (2) absolutely, of a good report; (a) active *give a good report, speak well (of), approve (of)* (LU 4.22); (b) passive *receive a good report, be well-spoken of, be approved, have a good reputation* (AC 6.3); (3) **of an emphatic declaration by an existing authority, such as God, the Spirit, Scripture testify, declare, witness (solemnly)** (HE 7.17); (4) of religious witness to truth and the factual content of the gospel as revealed truth from God *be a witness, tell about, testify* (AC 23.11)

**Joh 5:39 - Ye search** (*eraunâte*). Proper spelling as the papyri show rather than *ereunâte*, the old form (from *ereuna*, search) as in 7:52. The form here can be either present active indicative second person plural or the present active imperative second person plural. Only the context can decide. Either makes sense here, but the reason given "because ye think" (*hoti humeis dokeite*, clearly indicative), supports the indicative rather than the imperative. Besides, Jesus is arguing on the basis of their use of "the Scriptures" (*tas graphas*). The plural with the article refers to the well-known collection in the Old Testament (Mt 21:42; Lu 24:27). Elsewhere in John the singular refers to a particular passage (2:22; 7:38; 10:35). **In them ye have eternal life** (*en autais zôên aiônion echein*). Indirect assertion after *dokeite* without "ye" expressed either as nominative (*humeis*) or accusative (*humas*). Bernard holds that in John *dokeô* always indicates a mistaken opinion (5:45; 11:13,31; 13:29; 16:20; 20:15). Certainly the rabbis did make a mechanical use of the letter of Scripture as a means of salvation. **These are they** (*ekeinai eisin hai*). The true value of the Scriptures is in their witness to Christ (of me, *peri emou*). Luke (24:27,45) gives this same claim of Jesus, and yet some critics fail to find the Messiah in the Old Testament. But Jesus did.