Grace and Peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do you remember when playing we would say to someone who called us a name or said something that hurt our feelings we would say “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” More untrue words were ever spoken. The words we use are important. The response with these words comes from our Lizard brain. No, our brain is not the size of a lizard’s brain, but it is the part of our brain that is the limbic system which has been implicated as the seat of emotions and other mental and emotional processes. It is the part of the brain that is very primitive, comparing our evolution of a species. Many people call it the "Lizard Brain,” because the limbic system is about all a lizard has for brain function. It is in charge of fight, feeing, feeding, [fear](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/fear), or freezing up so is much more powerful than we humans credit it to be. The fight or flee can come in handy if we are in danger and we need to respond for our very safety. So, when someone calls us a name, insults us, or does something else to hurt our feelings it can cause fear and anxiety and instead of running away from a comment we wish to verbally fight back by responding emotionally using our Lizard brain. We have all been there. Somebody says something to us that cuts us to the core. Have you ever said something in anger and the person asks what do you mean, and you are sorry you said it because you really did not mean it. Married people know what I mean. We love our spouses and want them to be happy but something they say can emotionally threaten or hurt us and we immediately respond to protect our psyche that is hurtful, when we stop and think about it we didn’t mean to say it because our words can be hurtful and we don’t want to hurt the one we love. A church I served in Coldwater had an embroidery in a frame that has a Morton salt canister, I imagine everyone has one in their cupboard with the girl a little girl holding an umbrella in one hand to ward off falling rain and, in the other hand, a package of salt tilted back under her arm with the spout open and salt running out and the slogan “When It Rains It Pours®” which has been used since 1914, although the fashions have been updated several times over the years. The embroidery says “May I season my words with salt so they will taste better when I have to eat them.” This is a take on Colossians 4:6 which states **6**Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.” Good advice which we can practice counting to ten before responding to let another part of our brain and allowing what many neuroscientists believe is a network across several brain regions that is responsible for intelligence. The parieto-frontal integration theory, or P-FIT, proposes that intelligence arises from a network mostly located in the frontal and parietal lobes. “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” if we think it through, going beyond the response of a lizard, we realize words do hurt and go all the way to our soul and said over time can destroy our self-esteem or create depression, anxiety and many other things. We all have this tendency to do what we do not want to do, and we are powerless about certain behaviors. Understanding this automatic behavior allows us to surrender to what we cannot control. It frees us to do the next right thing by staying in the present rather than worrying about the future or being shamed and experiencing [guilt](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/guilt) or shame in the past. It takes practice. And more practice. Peter Steinke developed the Family System Theory for congregations. Peter Steinke’s Family Systems Theory for the church is a psychological framework that views the family as an interconnected emotional unit, where the behaviors, thoughts, and emotions of each family member influence the entire system. The emotions from our family or origin is an important part of how we relate with others. The way that we act in the congregation affects our family and how we respond to others. For example, dealing with a person in a congregation I served was difficult. Then, after studying Steinke I thought this through and asked them about her siblings. Then I understood. My relationship with my sister has been difficult because I feel (emotion) she is controlling and always knows the right thing to do and she needs to be a big sister to her little brother. Once I contemplated this our relationship improved and helped me to have a better relationship with my big sister. Sibling rivalry can last forever so thinking it through intelligently has been helpful. I think she will eventually come around.

Here is the thing, if we have a physical injury and break a bone like Alex Adelone and Aiden Hutchinson, defensive stars for the NFC North champion Detroit Lions these broken will heal, although at a different rate. My family physician tells me soft tissue injuries can often be more difficult to heal than broken bones. The media showed Anzalone’s arm with lots of stitches and it was gruesome to look at. After getting a look the normal response to just look away. We think about abuse being physical abuse but just as serious is verbal abuse. This can help to destroy someone. That is why we learn to love one another and treat one another with dignity and respect. People who are members or visitors all have something in common. On any given Sunday there are people that are hurting at one level or another and on an emotional level we can’t really see the scars like the physical scar of Anzalone. What we do know these scars are not always easy to heal so for everyone Jesus wants us to display human kindness and grace and do not want to be judged by some artificial, emotional response. As Jesus says love one another as I have loved you. This too requires practice. It’s like the joke about the person stopping someone on the streets of New York asking how they can get Carnegie Hall. The response was practice, practice, practice…St. Paul uses the image of the human body as a metaphor for the Body of Christ - the Church - to show an essential relationship among different parts. Just as the hand needs the eye, and the foot needs the leg, individuals in the church need each other to be effective in ministry. St Paul Lutheran functions well because of people tirelessly working together to carry our God’s mission in the world. Paul also acknowledges the connections between the parts and puts forth a model for how the Church can work to strengthen itself through its most essential vehicle – the community. Last week Paul talked about how the congregation has different spiritual gifts that worked together. No one role is more important than the other as we use our Spirit given gifts to conduct God’s mission for the glory of Gad. You may be a big toe and feel you are not as important as a more glamorous body part but if a body does not have a big toe it can’t keep it’s balance.

Words matter. The scriptures for today point us to the word that bears hope, promise, and life. Yes, because we are human our words can hurt or fail, but today we hear this holy word of wisdom, challenge, instruction, and hope that really allows us to live God’s promise as we serve one another. There is no a more noble cause. Rather than words that tear down, we are invited by the prophets and Jesus into God’s living words with and among friends that lift up, do not tear down. Jesus, in home in Nazareth attends the synagogue on the sabbath, where he was praised by everyone and reads from the scroll handed to him from the prophet Isaiah from Old Testament in ancient history where he announces good news to those wo struggle economically, a great number of people in their society, hope for the imprisoned, healing to those without sight, a lifting of the burden from those who are weighed down or oppressed, and even the in-breaking of a holy year of favor. The Jubilee from Lev. 25:1-17) which is a perhaps mythical time every fifty years when no crops were grown, all debts forgiven, all lands returned to their previous owner, and all slaves freed. Jesus now offers one thing more—fulfillment or action, which comes from another part of our brain. Those who have dreams and hope, those who work for justice and mercy on behalf of God, have come to fruition. We have an opportunity to ground ourselves in the one full Word that bears life. This word counters sticks and stones and all that oppresses; Jesus’ address announces God’s liberating actions. God accepts you for who you are. This Word sounds promise to all who hear; it is an invitation to see God at work among God’s people. Then he had the audacity to boldly say “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Yes, Jesus is filled with the power of the Spirit. We too are filled by the Spirit as we come together to celebrate and worship as a growing church family. Amen.