

Introduction: Beloved in the Lord, we are in the season of Epiphany when God reveals His Heart in Christ Jesus. Our Lord Jesus shows us our God most perfectly. Of course, God has shown Himself before but veiled in a burning Bush, in a cloud over Mt. Sinai and in a small still voice, but now He shows clearly Who He is. So we need to hear and believe! ***Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord!*** It is not the economy (stupid) that is the source of our life, but God Himself. It is not the political system that gives life and life abundantly, but God. It is not the crowd and masses of people who give strength but God alone. So today our readings show us our true life, our true strength and our true hope, namely Christ who is the Word made flesh and dwelling with us. So today by God's rich grace **given** through the Word and **lived** in the communion of saints may we see that our lives are to be full and fulfilled in our hearing of who and what Christ has done. Amen.

I. Nehemia the end of the Famine of Word: **And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God; and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.** The book had not been seen for a couple generations as the goal of the Babylonians in taking God's people captive was **assimilation**. The people were spread out in small groups throughout the Babylonian homeland. Mix up all the defeated people and keep them from ever achieving a critical mass to rebel. Make them become like you. Let time work as your ally so that **they forget life as it was** and their homeland and their God and accept your way of life and their place in your world. There had been no temple in Babylon. There had been no synagogue. **No copies of Torah were passed about.** Only the stories that old grandpas and grandmas told, reminded the young of God and His Word. There was a famine of God's Word and as a result faith withered and weakened and became detached from reality. Ezra opened the book in the sight of all. **Look!** Here is God's Holy Word. Hear and learn as I read! Ezra blessed God that God had allowed the people again to hear what they had despised before. It was the sin of God's people in despising the Word that caused God to allow it to be taken from them. Now, as the saying goes, "*you never know what you have until it's gone,*" now they worship for being able to hear the Word! Imagine that! The people thanking God for simply being able to go to church! And we have such trouble getting everyone to come today when we have cars and every convenience. Today people can't be bothered to wake up or get out of bed because it's my only day to sleep in. Today people complain that they know it all already so the services of God's house are boring. "*Yeah, yeah I know, Jesus died for me so that I am forgiven.*" Well, not with that attitude of course, but still we don't appreciate what we have in God's Holy Word, we've become assimilated into pagan culture. By the way God always has the people review the Word when they do something New! Leaving Egypt, entering the Promised Land, at the Conquest, they review the Word because it is the Word that is our connection to God. God communicates to us in the Word, it is the nerve system that connects head and body, they were not wrong to know that God's Holy Word is more precious than their own life. They were not wrong to bow their heads and worship the Lord with their faces to the ground at simply being able to hear that Holy Word once again! They were not wrong so see the Word as most precious, for it directs our Life as Believers!

II. The Church is ordered from the Logos: **But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body...If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.** Do you see? Paul calls us the body of Christ who is the Head who gives the direction and controls the whole for the good of all. The *Logos*, of the Church; the *reason, order* comes from the Word. God chose specifically to create and order by the Word and The Word (or Logos) is Christ. I know that I have mentioned this often, but it is central to the life of the Church and so our lives. Beloved, God's design is not for Christians to live in isolation. God's plan is not for us to fend for ourselves. God's will is not that we simply follow the path of least resistance, like water running down to the sea. We are the body of Christ together. We are ordered by Christ's design. We are united in Baptism and IN

CONFESSION of the Word. Without hearing the Word, believing the Word and Living together in the Word we are not the body of Christ. An appendage cut off will die, a cell that receives no nourishment from the body will die and a body without a head can do nothing but die. Life is lived as a whole or not at all. We draw breath because the Brain stem tells the muscles what to do. Our heart beats because of the impulses sent by the Brain stem and our mind is what allows our body to take in the nourishment needed to stay alive. Paul is reminding the Corinthians and us that we live *not by bread but by the Word of God*. Bread for the body and the Word for the Church and each of us individually for Christ. Because Christ is the **Logos** that orders the body and moves the body and knows the goal and end of the body. And Christ reveals to us the what the Law and Prophets, the Torah is all about! Christ reveals to us the Heart of our God. Christ reveals what it is all about when He suffers and dies in our place upon the Cross so that we might have Life and have it abundantly; the eternal life that God has in store for those who believe. On the Cross Jesus shows us the Heart of Scripture, and in the synagogue He opened the Scripture to the Church.

III. Christ's Words: And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.'" And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. Luke shows us how Jesus revealed Himself to the people. He began to say. He started speaking. He kept speaking. He habitually spoke. Our Lord Jesus is a revelation of God's grace both in His person and in His Words. He is always and never *Just Words*. He is The Definitive Word. He is the Word in action. He is the Word that gives what it says. The prophecy of Isaiah was about Him so it is fulfilled because He is there. He is doing what Isaiah says and more. He brings with Him, in His person and in His speech the Word of God, the Full Word of God that orders all things and so gives Life all the living. His Word is a Word of Grace because God is a God of Grace. To be sure, for those who reject Grace there is the Law and the consequences of the Law, damnation. But God in the flesh speaks and the words which proceed are grace and peace. Oh, see it clearly today. We, the Church, live from every gracious word of Christ that **WE HEAR**. As We hear the Word of the Gospel it gives us exactly what it says. God's Word gives what it says, because it **is** God's Word. The Word of peace gives peace in the heart and soul over and against God. The Word of forgiveness gives God's forgiveness. The Word of strength gives strength to our feeble faith, and so yes, He does suffer and die for us. Yes, they quote the proverb, "*Physician, heal thyself*" under the form "*He saved other but he cannot save himself, come down from the Cross if you are the Christ and we will believe.*" Yes, the people and the Leaders of the people spoke against Christ, but to all who hear and believe the Word He gives the fruit of that Cross, He gives the results of His Words and Actions. The Word of God is living and Active, it is never "*just words*" but it is always Christ and His life for us and directs our lives in Him through the Word. He didn't give his hometown or the Pharisees what they wanted; He gave them what they **needed**. The Word is always fulfilled in our hearing the Word that is either believed to our salvation or denied to our damnation. Still the Word always accomplishes the purpose for what God sent it, it guides and gives life to the Church. The Word made flesh always gives grace and peace, opens the eyes of the blind and proclaims release for the captives of sin. The Word gives all spiritual Blessings every time it is spoken and believed. Oh, believe the Word. Believe what your Lord says to you today. For it is never just words, it is **ALWAYS the Word** made flesh and Crucified for us. The Word is always Christ. The Word is always living and active. It is never just words, but always God's Word for us; the Word that gives what it says. **And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God; and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.** We worship our God in hearing the Word and living together as the church by the Word! **Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.** Do you see? Paul calls us the body of Christ who is the Head who gives the direction and controls the whole for the good of all. **and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good**

news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Amen.