

Isaiah 55:10-13 (NIV)

10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. 12 You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."

We certainly live in a success-driven society don't we? I guess that would be a bi-product of capitalism. There are many good things that come from a success-driven society. There are competitive businesses that all work to improve their products. There are competitive schools that offer the best education possible in order to attract students. Students are motivated to learn as much as possible because they know that knowledge will help them succeed in the future. There is a lot to be said for a success-driven society.

However, when it comes to God's Word, success isn't so easily measured. Some churches today define success by how many people attend their services each week. Some churches measure success by how many new members are gained in a calendar year. Some churches measure success by how much money they bring in. By the same token, they consider it a failure if your attendance declines, the number of new people is few, and the money doesn't grow. That's a dangerous way of looking at things because that's not how God defines success.

God promises that his word will have success. He says that it will not return to him empty, but will accomplish what he desires. Sometimes, that success takes years to see. The seed that is planted with the Word may not bud until years later. Sometimes that seed is rejected; but that doesn't mean that God's Word failed. God's Word is sometimes used to confirm unbelievers in their sin.

So how can we measure success in this success-driven society? We can measure our success in our faithfulness in proclaiming the Word. If we proclaim God's Word in its truth and purity faithfully, then we have done what God has asked us to do. God will determine what purpose his Word will accomplish. God will determine if we see those "earthly successes." God promises that the proclamation of his Word will bring us joy and peace. So, don't get caught up in the numbers game of our success-driven society. Proclaim God's Word and leave the success up to him.