2026-11-15 Points

Title: The Word Above All Traditions: Returning to the Authority of Scripture and the Fullness of Christ

Sermon Summary: Drawing from Mark 7, John 1, and Matthew 3, this sermon calls believers to elevate the Word of God above personal habits, church traditions, and cultural assumptions. The pastor emphasizes that Jesus himself is the Word made flesh, and that every scripture is therefore a direct encounter with Christ. He challenges the congregation to move beyond passive familiarity with the Bible toward active, teachable discipleship that can be shared with others. A significant portion of the message addresses the subject of baptism, arguing from Matthew 3 and Romans 6 that immersion is the biblical model and that baptism is not a work of merit but a death-to-self surrender to Christ. The sermon culminates in the baptism of a congregation member, presented as a living illustration of genuine, Spirit-called conversion marked by brokenness, humility, and a desire to die to the old self and rise to new life in Jesus.

Key Points:
- A disciple is not merely a follower but someone who learns from Christ in order to teach others, and the church in America has largely stopped talking about what the Word of God actually says
- Jesus is identified as the Word in John 1, meaning that reading Scripture is a direct encounter with Christ himself, and his word will outlast heaven and earth
- Human tradition, whether personal habits, denominational customs, or inherited assumptions, must never be elevated above the clear teaching of Scripture
- John the Baptist's ministry at the Jordan River was Spirit-driven rather than institutionally organized, and his message centered on genuine repentance evidenced by changed behavior, not religious pedigree
- Jesus declared baptism to be proper and necessary to fulfill all righteousness, submitting to it himself as an act of obedience rather than self-sufficiency
- The Greek word baptizo means to plunge or immerse, and the separate

word rantizo is used for sprinkling, which does not appear in New Testament salvation passages
- The phrase "outward sign of an inward grace" does not appear anywhere in Scripture and is an example of tradition being mistaken for biblical teaching
- Salvation is a calling of God that produces genuine brokenness and conviction, not a transaction completed by repeating a sinner's prayer or following a family's example
- Romans 6 frames baptism as a burial and resurrection, dying to the old self and rising to walk in new life with Christ
- God's will done God's way carries God's blessing, and believers are responsible to keep measuring their practice against the Word rather than against what is comfortable or familiar

Scripture Reference:
- Mark 7 (tradition of men versus the Word of God, referenced from the previous week's message)
- John 1:1-34 (Jesus as the Word made flesh, John the Baptist's witness, the Lamb of God)
- Matthew 3:7-17 (John the Baptist's message of repentance, the baptism of Jesus)
- Proverbs 3:5 (trusting God rather than leaning on one's own understanding)
- Jeremiah 17:9 (the deceitfulness of the human heart)
- Hebrews 4:12 (the Word of God as living, active, and sharper than a double-edged sword)
- Matthew 24:35 (heaven and earth will pass away but Christ's words will not)
- John 15 (the vine and the branches, bearing fruit or being cut off)
- Romans 6 (baptism as burial and resurrection with Christ)
- Hebrews 2 (the warning against neglecting so great a salvation)
- Colossians 1 (Christ as the agent of all creation)

Stories:
- The pastor recounts being called to preach before having any formal training, describing a prayerful wrestling match with God that has continued for 48 years, in which he was directed to preach only from what he had

personally experienced and discovered in the Word rather than from secondhand teaching
- He describes the childhood game of telephone, in which a whispered message changes completely by the time it passes through several people, using it to illustrate why having the Word written down is a safeguard against the distortion of tradition
- He shares pastoral conversations with individuals who came to him uncertain of their salvation, having been baptized as part of a family event rather than in response to a personal calling from God
- He references Martin Luther's posting of his theses on the Wittenberg door as an example of someone who returned to Scripture and found that the church had drifted from what the Bible actually taught
- He introduces the baptism of David, a man who contacted the pastor asking to be baptized and who, when expressing that he did not feel worthy, was told by the pastor that his sense of unworthiness was itself a good sign, and who described himself as a 35-year-old man ready to die in order to become a new man in Jesus