



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

January 14, 2018

The Five I Am's (Hope Restored Series)

Pastor Dan Chun

Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Mark 1:2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

Mark 1:3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

Mark 1:4 John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Mark 1:6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

Mark 1:7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.

Mark 1:8 I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

As you have heard last week, we have started a new sermon series called "Hope Restored." How do we have our own hope restored and how do we restore hope for others who desperately need hope?

We will be going through the Gospel of Mark to see how we all can have hope, a hope that replenishes, refreshes, and restores us, and how we can give that hope to others.

We start out with John the Baptizer as our model. I love this guy. Steve told you a lot about him last week. John was the cousin of Jesus. John was a charismatic leader. A prophet. He was a holy hipster who doesn't mind dressing differently in camel hair, not sure if that is with one hump or two, and with a leather belt. He ate well. He was not only into holy food but *Whole Foods*, eating locusts and wild honey. That's *Down to Earth*.

He was courageous and brave as he was willing to go against the powerful King Herod Antipas, challenging his immorality. The same Herod Antipas who tried later to kill Jesus. You'll hear more about this conflict later in the series.

I like John but not because he was courageous and brave and baptized tons of people after calling them to repentance, hence, his moniker John the Baptizer. No, I like him because of what he said in the seventh verse (predicting Jesus):

Mark 1:7 John proclaimed, "The One who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.

I love John because of his humility. Imagine you are there. Even though there are crowds of people who are following him, loving him, and are being

baptized by him. He could take credit and fame for it all, but John says, "I am not the Messiah! There is one coming who is more powerful than I. Jesus is coming."

John is not competitive. He doesn't let popularity go to his head. He doesn't let the flame of fame. He doesn't let his resumé make him think he is big stuff. When you see the t-shirts and logo wear that says "He > I," that is from John the Baptizer. John proclaims, "Jesus is greater than I! I am not even fit to untie His shoelaces. "You may think I am great but I am not the Messiah.

You have heard that today I am going to give my state of the church address, my vision for 2018. I am going to share with you my vision that entails basically five "I AM" statements and one "I AM NOT" statement. And they are all tied into the lifestyle of John the Baptizer, and they will help put yesterday's false alarm situation into context. We begin with the I AM NOT statement.

For 2018 please start every day with yourself looking in the mirror and saying, "I am not the Messiah." With that one statement, with that one prayer to God a whole new world, a new fantastic point of view will open up for you. Why? Because when we can DAILY get off of our high horse and know that we are not the Messiah, we will turn to Jesus, the real Messiah, for purpose, peace, passion, power, and patience. And then we can indeed have our hope restored.

We need to confess that we are not smart enough, strong enough, and wise enough to save ourselves. We need the higher power found in the name is Jesus. Please say daily – I am not the Messiah, and it will open you up to Jesus and all of His power, wisdom, and guidance. When something like yesterday happens, remember that Jesus is still Lord and we are not.

That is the “I AM NOT” statement I referred to. Now here are the FIVE I AM’S for my vision for each of us for 2018. I am going to run through quickly the first four and then concentrate on the last one. Here are the “Five I Am’s”

THE FIVE I AM’S

- I Am Aware. (Presence)
- I Am Waiting (Patience)
- I Am Weak (Power of the Holy Spirit)
- I Am Trying (Perseverance)
- I Am All In (Passion)

1) I AM AWARE (PRESENCE)

May we continually be aware of God’s presence. Look for Jesus in nature, in circumstances, in emergencies, while at school, while at work or at home or in the community. Being aware of God’s presence every day is key to healthy living. Don’t wait for a day like yesterday. Do it everyday.

One of the best ways to be continually aware of God’s presence is to do the *Daily Examen* that we have talked about several times last year.

Do the St. Ignatius *Daily Examen* every day before you go to bed or at noon, and it will make us more significantly aware of God’s presence. It will graft in God’s presence in our lives. Sit down in solitude at home, in the office, in Starbucks and:

- GIVE THANKS for everything you can think of, including a day like yesterday.
- REVIEW THE DAY or previous day hour by hour and look for God’s presence.

- APOLOGIZE to God for where you fell short of being who God wants you to be.
- FORGIVE those who have hurt you. Yes, including Civil Defense.
- TURN TO GOD FOR GRACE. Seek God’s grace and forgiveness for yourself when you haven’t been who you need to be.

Do that and God’s presence will be enhanced in our life. I believe God is protecting us, blessing us, leading us constantly through the day but we don’t notice it because we are not aware. Be aware of His presence. Do it daily and build your reservoir especially for a day like yesterday.

2) I AM WAITING (PATIENCE)

May this be a year when we realize that a lot of life is about waiting. That is part of the deal. Maybe it means waiting long for the right job, for the pain to go away, for the headlining to happen, or for the right boyfriend or girlfriend to materialize.

Waiting is part of the deal. May we be able to clearly have the patience from God that says, “I’m waiting. I’m waiting upon you, God, and having the faith that You are in control and You want the best for me.” It’s always God’s timing, not ours.

I know that the pain can be so great and seems to last so long: The grief of losing a loved one, the illness, the feelings of rejection. But if we acknowledge that waiting is part of the plan and know that God is there with us, leading us, crying with us, supporting us, then 2018 can be a better year, whether for 38 minutes, 38 hours, or 38 years.

3) I AM WEAK (POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT)

If we know we are not the Messiah, can we say “I’m weak and need God’s power”? Now that is a hard vision for 2018. But if we are not the Messiah, can we fully and clearly admit that we are

not strong enough, wise enough, gifted enough to save ourselves or humanity without God’s help. By saying I’m weak, it doesn’t mean that I am a doormat or super dumb. It means I am so aware of my weakness, my imperfection that I need the power of the Holy Spirit. I need the Holy Spirit to fill me, empower me, lead me.

It’s in the Holy Spirit, as we learned last year in our “How to Pray” series, that we have the power to pray and see people healed, the power to hear God’s supernatural voice, the power to have spiritual gifts that enable us to supernaturally do things we couldn’t normally do.

4) I AM TRYING (PERSEVERANCE)

Can we say, “I’M TRYING,” which leads us to perseverance, not perfection? One of the ways we accept ourselves and accept others is to know that EVERYONE is TRYING THE BEST they can, even Civil Defense employees. Yes, get angry, but what if that man who hit the button inadvertently was your son or a friend? You without sin throw the first stone.

When a system is based on “we never make mistakes” so there is no template to correct it, when there is no fail-safe procedure, then we get in trouble.

I am a follower of Jesus because He is the best fail-safe system. Christianity is based on sin and failure, and so we need the Savior.

Sometimes a friend or a family member or a colleague fails us. We need to know that that is the best they can do and give people a break. No one is perfect.

When you feel like you failed, it is often when we really tried our best, but it just didn’t work, or we made a mistake. We don’t have all knowledge or all power, and we did the very best we could have with what knowledge or ability we were given.

We are not the Messiah, so persevere. Just because things didn't go well, or you lost that job, or you made the wrong decision, or that relationship failed, it does not necessarily mean you did not do the best you could. Be easier on yourself. Be easier on others.

The four I Am's lead us into the presence of God, patience, power, and perseverance. And now the fifth I Am, where I want to spend the majority of our time.

5) I AM ALL IN (PASSION)

May this be the year that our passion grows and articulates a faith that we say, "We are all in, Lord. We will do ANYTHING You ask us to do." We will sacrifice. We will be focused on the mission, which is to really love God, really love people, and reach as many people as possible for Christ. This is a heart check for 2018. Do we really want others to know Jesus? Do we really want people to experience His forgiveness and purpose and love?

We had a serious scare yesterday didn't we? (*CNN graphic of text message of false alarm of ballistic missile heading towards Hawaii was shown.*)

When we saw the alert that there was an incoming missile attack, we all felt our adrenalin pump and heart rate increase. We could not believe what we were reading. Some understandably panicked.

For me I remember my parents telling me that when Pearl Harbor was attacked, they were home and the KGU radio announcer was saying "Take cover! Get off the streets! We are being attacked by enemy planes. This is the real McCoy. Take cover!"

So when I read, "This is not a drill," it was like hearing the phrase "This is the real McCoy," and my stomach dropped. It is happening again, and I am in my home as my parents were, on the same property, but this time the damage and human loss would be astronomically greater.

It's amazing how many things that run through your mind in an instant. I was concerned for my family and where to go for protection. Who do I call for last words to loved ones? Is this a nuclear missile that will take out the island, or a smaller warhead that will take out only 3-8 kilometers?

Then I was thinking how will the church staff AND members survive? How can I help them? But if a missile hits, will I be able to help others? Maybe I'll be hurt, wounded, and I can't help? But then I was a thinking I wish we had a crow bar with me. I could use it to help my family or others if things have collapsed on them and they need help to be freed.

But then we come to today's question. Knowing that the entire state was thinking about possible death, the question before us all should be, if we were to die, would we be assured that we would go to heaven? It's a real McCoy question. How is your relationship with Jesus who told us He is the only way to the Heavenly Father?

What's keeping us from asking family, friends, colleagues that question now? What are we waiting for to make sure others, including strangers, know about the eternal benefits of knowing Jesus?

The Bible says not even Jesus knows when the last day is coming. Could be tomorrow or today. And it could happen in an instant, especially in a point of history when there are more nuclear arms than ever before, and human sin or error can start things that we don't want. Time's up. Time to come to Christ. It's in Christ we can have hope restored.

Other questions we can ask ourselves about being all-in: Do we want to keep God's blessings to ourselves or do we know we were blessed to be a blessing to others right now? Do we have a PASSION that we really want to be involved as much as possible in His ministry and serve, or do we just want to watch and be a consumer of the benefits of the church? Are you a consumer

Christian or a committed Christian? What's our "spiritual crowbar" to help free up others, to lift their burdens, to pull them out of a jam to know Christ?

If we are moving towards giving a tithe of 10% of our income to God's ministry, do we also tithe 10% of our work time, retirement time, school time, to God's ministry and live on the other 90%? Are we willing to be on the playing field, or are we just going to be in the stands watching? Or actually are all followers of Jesus full-time ministers who are always helping, serving, and sharing Jesus' love with others?

You know, sometimes when we are in the bleachers just watching, we can be critics of how things should be done. But it's really not fair to be critiquing when you're in the bleachers and not in the arena with those who are working so hard. For it is in the arena where you get a different perspective, a different point of view and realize how complex and hard things are. It always looks much easier from the bleachers. Consumer, critical Christians are hard to bear.

In 1910 former US President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech that talked about the *Man in the Arena*. Here is what he said in his speech in Paris, France.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory

nor defeat. [Excerpt from Theodore Roosevelt speech "Citizenship in a Republic" in Paris, France, April 23, 1910.]

Friends, we need people in 2018 that are in the arena and not just watching from the bleachers.

We ALL need to roll up our sleeves and really learn more about the Bible, learn more about how to help others better, and give and serve. Time's up.

We need service in so many areas – ushering, hospitality, helping in children's ministries, generous donors, drivers, parking volunteers, set-up and take-down teams on Sundays. There is great need for people in the arena. To say "I'm All In" means to see a problem and **then answer the question** "What am I going to do about it?"

I have some friends named Ken and Becky Yeung, who are successful business people in northern California. They are people who are all-in on their commitment to Christ to help those in need, especially those who have no voice, those who are viewed as weak and disabled.

When Ken and Becky adopted their physically fit baby daughter Melissa, they discovered that China needed a lot of help with their orphanages, especially the orphanages for children with special needs. Young children with special needs are at the bottom rung of the ladder in China, as they are not always given the care, training, affection or the chance to be adopted as other kids.

And yet the Yeungs knew there were so many people who would love to adopt a child, especially a special needs child. But these special-needs kids needed to be trained and educated and given affection from the time they were born.

So about 14 years ago in working with China they founded the *Prince of Peace Children's Home*, an orphanage in Tianjin just outside Beijing. Today they serve 144 children from infants to 13-year old teenagers—all with special needs. They have spent much of their own money and

their time in building and operating the orphanage and contracted World Vision to run it. They are making a difference. They are IN THE ARENA.

Last fall, Tim Shaw, John and Maile Singson, Debbie Hirai, Drs. Dale and Judy Vincent, Gary Toh, my wife Pam, and I visited that orphanage. *(A picture of Ken and Becky Yeung with some of the orphans was shown.)*

Half of the children have Down syndrome. Most of the others have some form of physical disability due to cerebral palsy. For many of the children their minds are fine – intelligent, they are funny, courteous, talented, and have great hearts and personalities. But the clock is ticking for the because when they turn 14 years of age, China prohibits them from being adopted, and when they are 18 they have to leave the orphanage, which means a harder future for them. But if they are disabled, they will be institutionalized for the rest of their life.

But if people adopt them before they turn 14, they can have a better future. They can have hope restored. The clock is ticking. So the Yeungs are trying to find them families. If you know people who might want to adopt a child from China, please contact me.

Through the Yeungs you could have a child in about 9 months, which is streamlined and fast. I know that four of the neatest kids we personally met and played with have recently been registered for adoption by our own Hawaii International Child (HIC) organization, which has these 4 kids in their responsibility for only the next 75 days.

The Yeungs or HIC would help you see any of their children prior to adoption, if you so choose, or you just could take my recommendation and save time (haha!)! The Yeungs have streamlined the process. So please talk to me or Gary Toh later if you or friends or relatives have an interest in this. Or you could talk to Kristine Altwies, the head of HIC who

happens to be here in the front row and will stay here to answer any of your questions after the service. Kristine will stand near me when I shake hands at the front door after the service.

Many of the orphaned kids are fine mentally, except maybe they have trouble with their hands or their leg but their intellect is normal. Let me show you four of the children I met that could be adopted now through HIC:

(Picture of Josh and Blake was shown) That's Josh in the wheelchair, who has great personality, humor and leadership skills. That's Blake on the left who is so polite and humble that when given candy he immediately shared it with others rather than hoarding.

(Picture Terry was shown) That's TERRY with the shorter leg, who just had surgery to make things better. He has a great sense of humor.

(Pictures of Pastor Dan with a boy was shown) And this is a child who had a beautiful voice who sang a solo. We named him "DAN" after me, just for fun. He is so joyful and so cuddly. He is super friendly and affectionate and surprised me with a kiss. He is super joyful.

You can see the children's personality. As I saw what the Yeungs have created there, I knew these children have a chance to have hope restored and to be raised in a Christian home.

They allow single adults to adopt too *(Picture Pastor Tim Shaw and a child with arms raised was shown)*, not that I am hinting, Pastor Tim. As you can see already, Pastor Tim taught this child what to do when a touchdown is scored.

For most orphans in China there is not a lot of hope due to the 14-year age ceiling when they no longer can be adopted and after 18 they might be institutionalized for the rest of their life. That is really hard.

And due to Ken and Becky paying for people to train the kids in things like math, or baking, the kids are far ahead of other kids in other orphanages and maybe they might even find jobs some day. This orphanage is one of the flagships of all of China. Ken and Becky understood what it means to be blessed to be a blessing.

They were able to adopt a child, Melissa with no medical difficulties but wanted to help other children who did have difficulties. And more than that, they desperately are trying to get many of them adopted into loving families. Only about 4 children a year are adopted, but 54 kids in total over the years now living in Northern America or Europe.

I would love it if FIRST PREZ had many adopted children in our community-- including children with special needs. The Bible says our Heavenly Father has adopted us, and so we have a chance to adopt others.

But the point is Ken and Becky are all in, in their faith. Instead of just spending most of their time or energy or money on themselves, they decided to help those who have no voice in society. They are seriously using their business, their money and time to help who many consider the lowest of the lows – orphans with medical issues. And they would love to put them in Christian homes.

Next year, I am hoping our youth group (who are at a retreat this weekend) can go to China to help serve the children of *Prince of Peace Children's Home*. We might even try to bring a medical team to help the children. Let Pastor Tim Shaw know if you are interested. You don't need to be a doctor to help or serve the children on these trips.

But you might say, fine and dandy Dan, great for the Yeungs to be a model for us, but they are called to help Hawaii and China through their orphanage and adoptions, but what about us here in Hawaii?

Here in Hawaii, here in our church, we are calling our people to be in the arena, to be all-in, to ask ourselves: Do we really have a heart to reach people for Christ? Do we want to lead them to Jesus? Are we going to be just consumer Christians in the bleachers or highly committed Christians on the field in the arena?

So here is the vision for 2018-19.

The staff and elders and I are firmly committed to reach more people for Christ. Hence, we feel called to start a fourth worship service in Honolulu! I am not sure where. We are just starting the process of searching for property. I do not know if it will mean to buy, lease or rent. We believe, if we start a fourth service we can reach more for the Lord.

Now, let me give you a few more details on the vision. This will NOT be a new church plant. Church plant means that it becomes its own church with its own finances and staff. This will be called a satellite church service, meaning it is still under our umbrella, run by our staff, and funded by First Prez. It will still part of First Prez, but it will probably have a different name. Same church but different name. Just like Toyota owns Lexus and Scion. And if you break down just the Toyota brands, there's Camry, Corolla, Prius, Highlanders, RAV4's. Different brands, but same company.

We certainly don't want to call it "First-Presbyterian-Church-of-Honolulu-But-This-One-Is-Really-In-Honolulu-And-Not-In-Kaneohe-Church"!

So how will this fourth service have a different brand? As a new church start-up it won't have an organ or choir. It will have a band like 11:11. We do want more young adults to attend as that is a demographic we presently do not have abundance. It will be geared towards those who are young-minded and like contemporary music. But, of course, EVERYONE is welcome!

This will be a church that is NOT trying to take other Christians from other churches. We DON'T want to steal other fish from other aquaria. The high priority is that we want to lead non-Christians to Christ. Hence, we don't want five hundred people from First Prez here at Ko'olau to fill the new site because then we won't have room for the un-churched.

We cannot stop all of you from attending, but here's the deal: if you want to come to the new worship service, you HAVE TO BRING at least two nonChristians with you. That's your ticket to attend. If you don't know two nonChristian friends hmmm, better work on that. If you are going to be part of that community, you will have to SERVE and be in the arena. We will need everyone to serve, from whatever site you worship at.

When we go into a new neighborhood, we will need help to walk door to door to any shop or apartment or community area to let people know that a new church service is coming into their area. We will want to serve the neighborhood —help the homeless, the residents, the employees in the area.

Statistics show that new church worship services bring in 20% more unchurched people than the home site. Research shows that it is easier to invite your unchurched friends if they live near the church service. So now this will give us two sites—Windward and Honolulu.

Research shows that 100% of churches all started out as a start-up. Duh! This church started in the YWCA on Richards Street back in 1959. Why? To reach nonChristians and lead them to Christ, to take a risk for Jesus to get out of their comfort zone. Then the church moved to Makiki and flourished. Then it moved to here in Kaneohe.

Will the new fourth service be on Sunday morning? Not sure – maybe or might be Sunday night or may start off on a weeknight.

I am reading a book right now about the CBS show called *60 Minutes*. I am fascinated about that show because I used to be a TV newscaster for the local CBS News station – KGMB-TV but also because *60 Minutes* has been around for 50 years...50 years(!), and it still is one of the top-rated shows on TV. That is an amazing achievement with people being so fickle in their taste. *Cheers*, *Seinfeld*, or *Downton Abbey* or *Breaking Bad* didn't last that long. But part of the secret of *60 Minutes*' is that they know how to keep changing with the times but still have the same core values and desire for excellence.

Our church has been around for almost 59 year, .and I pray that we can still grow and reach people for Christ by still keeping our core while being open to change to risk to reach a changing society and new generation.

Now you might have tons more questions about this, so I invite you to come to the congregational meeting right after the third service and we can address them then.

But let me close to challenge us all that this might be a year where we can say:

I AM AWARE of God's Presence.

I AM WAITING. I have learned patience to wait.

I AM WEAK. I know I need the help and the in-filling of the Holy Spirit

I AM TRYING. I will try my best and I will graciously know that others who fail me are trying their best.

And finally may 2018 be a year where I say **I AM ALL IN**, and where we say, "I want to be in the arena. I want to serve and with passion!" And even when in the face of a statewide scare I can know in Christ that we can have Hope Restored! Let's pray.