



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

June 23, 2013

"Last Words" (Gospel of Luke Series)

The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

And so here it is, the end of the Gospel of Luke. Can you believe it that we began our Gospel of Luke series in December of 2011, and here we are in June 2013 finally putting the wraps on it? Why take seventeen months to go through a Gospel? Because unless we go deep into the study of a book of the Bible and understand the context of it, we might miss some of its meaning.

I just came back from Fuller President Richard Mouw's last address to the students at the Commencement two Saturdays ago. His last words, his departing thoughts for the students and faculty were very important. We hung on his words and his every gesture.

When the game is on the line and a coach in the team huddle gives his last words for the last play, it is important—critically—important—that everyone listens in for instructions. The last words.

Whether it is the World War II landing on the beach at Normandy to begin the United States' offense to save the world and the commanding officer is telling his men what to do ... whether it's William Wallace addressing his troops at the Battle of Stirling for Scottish independence, or Aragorn giving his last message before the Last Battle against Sauron in the Lord of the Rings, the last words are incredibly important.

And so were the last words of Jesus Christ to His disciples. He had

lived on this earth, fully human, fully divine. God came down and took the form of a man; first as a baby in a manger, and then as a grown man who taught and healed people, and then sacrificed His life on a cross so that all people, including us, can be saved from the penalty of our sins. Jesus was killed but then resurrected three days later.

In our Scripture passage for today, Jesus is giving His last words to His disciples before going to heaven. You will see that His last words will be a compilation of the various themes of His teaching. So His last words are like one big reminder. Turn with me to Luke 24:44.

Luke 24:44 Then Jesus said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."

Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

Luke 24:46 and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,

Luke 24:47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 You are witnesses of these things.

Luke 24:49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Luke 24:50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them.

Luke 24:51 While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.

Luke 24:52 And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy;

Luke 24:53 and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

May God bless the reading of His word.

Let me pluck out two key verses from these last words: "...And that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:47-48)

Jesus is saying to proclaim the news that the Messiah has come. Proclaim that you and I are not perfect, that we all have a bent towards sin and selfishness that bring about pain and suffering. Proclaim that if we can repent and change our ways, we will have a new life—not a life without pain, not a life without sin—but a life where we have strength, hope, power, and wisdom to carry on in spite of the difficulties of life.

Jesus Christ did not die on a cross so that you and I could just keep the good blessings to ourselves. We must PROCLAIM that Jesus is real and here in our world.

Jesus is no child's fairy tale. But He speaks to the fairy tale in our hearts that we all want to believe: that good will overcome evil; that the weak can become strong; that the so-called ugly duckling is not really ugly; that there are supernatural powers that can be used here on earth for good or for bad and that God offers them to us to do good.

Christianity is not supposed to be intellectual head knowledge. It is to be proclaimed—that Jesus is here and real. And how do we proclaim that? Through our words and actions.

Jesus didn't die on a cross just so we could meet in a church for one hour a week. Jesus didn't die on a cross just so we can feel good and keep that goodness and blessing to ourselves. We are blessed to be a blessing to others. That is how it is supposed to work.

Two weeks ago I preached on the idea that that we are called not to be Fans of Jesus but to be Followers of Jesus.

Fans applaud Jesus for what He has done and what He can do. Fans might, like concertgoers, attend church events and worship. They are fans of Jesus in that they support His existence. They like His performance in the game. Fans are up in the stands applauding the players down on the field. They don't participate in the game. Jesus fans are like movie fans who watch movies. They have never written a film script, directed, produced, or filmed a movie, yet they are self-proclaimed movie critics.

Same thing with fans who watch pro sports. They just watch the game and often think they are experts

of the game. They may complain about the players and how they play though they are not on the field and have never been on the field.

Jesus followers, on the other hand, go further than fans. Followers are not in the stands. They are on the field working, suffering, playing hard, and trying to accomplish the goals of the coach.

Jesus followers are willing to suffer for Christ. They are willing to sacrificially give money for Christ whether asked or not. They try to tithe and learn to tithe until tithing becomes part of their life. They dedicate their time, talents, and treasure to Christ. They see their jobs and homes as opportunities for ministry—socially, financially—and for charity work. Fans appreciate Jesus, which is not bad, but followers are willing to die for Jesus.

This comes together in our text in verse 48: "You are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:48)

The word witnesses is the word *martus* in Greek, from which we get the English word *martyrs*. To be a witness is for one to be a martyr, one willing to die for Christ. Wow! Is that what it means to be a follower? But who in their right mind would do that for any faith let alone for a job or profession?

Think about it: It's the same calling for a Navy Seal or any one in the armed forces (like our own Greg Chow who's currently in Afghanistan) or those in the police force, fire departments, and emergency rescue services. The inherent, implied question on the application is: are you willing to give your life for others?

Sometimes we can think that the Christian faith is all about us, and what we want and what God can get for us. But following Christ has always

meant to be focused on others, to help and save the lives of others.

Remember the alleged quote many, many years ago from famous college basketball player Lew Alcindor when asked why he became a Muslim? He said, "It's because in Christianity, nothing was required of me." So Lew Alcindor became a devout Muslim and changed his name to Kareem Abdul Jabbar.

In fact, Lew Alcindor said in a Sports Illustrated magazine article: "It seemed to me that there was nothing in the world as unlike Christ as Christians. ("UCLA was a Mistake," Sports Illustrated, November 3, 1969 by Lew Alcindor, Jack Olsen.)

Ugh! Who would have portrayed Christianity to him as a wimpy faith where nothing is required of him except to ask God to bless him day and night? What we are really called to be is to be followers of Jesus with a passion similar to that of Navy Seals!

I was watching The CBS program 60 Minutes recently, which is one of my all time favorite TV shows – other than Master Chef and Save Me. A recent episode of 60 Minutes featured American aid worker Jessica Buchanan who was kidnapped by terrorists in Somalia for 93 days. She almost died on the 91st day of her captivity because of kidney failure.

Two days later, on the 93rd day, Navy Seal Team Six flew into the desert in the dead of night, found her and killed her nine abductors and brought her to a drop zone for rescuing helicopters. But at one point, when they thought there was going to be a retaliatory attack, the Navy Seals told her to lie down on the ground, and then they circled around her with their weapons pointed out. They covered her body with their bodies to protect her from possible gunfire.

They were ready to give their lives to protect a woman they did not know. They lay there until helicopters came in for her. She said the Navy Seals were kind and gentle. She never saw their faces. She never heard their names. They handed her an American flag after they put her on the rescue helicopter and then disappeared into the night on another helicopter.

Those Navy Seals didn't do it to be thanked. They didn't do it to be known or famous. They did it for the cause of helping people for that is what they were trained to do. They are witnesses to American freedom. They are witnesses to the belief that no one is to be left behind.

We, too, as Christ-followers are called to help other in all ways possible. We cannot leave anyone behind, and we do not do it for the applause, fame, or gratitude.

For some years I have talked about how church needs to be a power projection platform. That is a military term. It means, for example, that when soldiers are training at Schofield (exercising, marching around in formation, rappelling, and shooting weapons), it's not so they can exercise, march, rappel, and shoot weapons on a base. They are training so that one day they will go out in power to be projected forward and outward for the cause of freedom to protect our country. The purpose is to go out.

I have used that idea of a power projection platform for our church in that all that we learn here on campus is not to study, pray, and keep the good stuff to ourselves. The purpose is to project outwards, to go out and be witnesses. Power in the Holy Spirit Projection Platform!

Notice how the Scripture passage says that we are witnesses to

“these things”: “You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:48)

What are “these things?” It is the truth that we were once blind to but now now we see. It's the truth that we have sinned, that we have succumbed to the worldly things in life. But then Jesus saved us by dying on a cross, and that He and His angels have rescued us. And because of the grace and unconditional love that God has extended to us, we now want to rescue others.

We witnessed in our own lives and in the lives of others how it is to be saved. We felt it. We saw it. We saw people healed. We saw people turn around. We witnessed lives change.

In His last words, Jesus said that if you have WITNESSED these things...then you have got to tell others and proclaim the good news, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our church desires to be more than just Jesus fans; we want to be Jesus as evidenced by our actions. It is not just having head or Bible knowledge or just singing worship music. Here is how we do it: by actively trying to live out the gospel and not by just growing to be a big church. I say what? Let me give a metaphor.

As you may know I am a student of the Titanic story – of how the big ocean liner called the Titanic was supposed to be a city that could float because it could carry more than 2000 passengers and nearly 900 crewmen. It was the ship that wasn't supposed to sink.

Because of the belief that it couldn't sink, the owner of the ship decided not to equip the ship with enough lifeboats that would save everyone on board, if they were ever to have an emergency. Besides, the ship

looked better with fewer lifeboats attached to its side. So only 20 lifeboats

were supplied to the Titanic, instead of the needed 64. The owner was more interested in having a ship that looked less cluttered, rather than a ship that was safe. Plus, the law back then didn't require him to install 64 lifeboats.

So when the Titanic hit an iceberg and began to sink, there were not enough lifeboats to save everyone. To make matters worse, when lifeboats were lowered, they were not fully occupied. More people would've been saved if the lifeboats were used to the fullest, but the privileged passengers in first class and the crew decided they would only save themselves.

Hear this from your captain of this ship, your senior pastor. I am all for evangelism, all for church growth, but not in a way that it means we get so big that we can't take care of people who need help. We will not be a church that only takes care of the healthy ones so that others can't use the lifeboats.

In other words, we sacrifice church size and cluttered calendars in order to have more lifeboats—care ministries to those who need help. We sacrifice size so that we can care better for one another.

In the past 10 years there has been what is called the Simple Church movement, which basically says that in order to have large church growth, we will just only worship, children's Sunday School, small groups and missions. That is it. No other ministries. No Men's Ministry, no Women's Ministry, and no Young Adults Ministry. They called that “simple church.” Churches who followed that pattern grew really big.

First Prez, is choosing to do not simple church but complex church – by choosing to have a church that offers a wide array of ministries to take care of the congregation:

Divorce Care, Grief Share, Cancer Survivors group, men's, women's, young adult, young moms, senior citizens, children's, youth ministries, along with Alpha, BodyWorks, Life Ministries, and WAKO. It's like a big ship with many lifeboats for people who need help.

But this kind of church only works when its members become Jesus followers, not just Jesus fans. There is a lot of work to do to care for those whom God has sent to us and for the others outside our church whom God has called us to help. It only works if we all pitch in in some way and if we don't let only a few do all the work.

In the last 14 months of the life of long-time First Prez member Paul Honzik, he had 105 contacts from our church, according to our pastoral records. First Prez reached out to him and cared for him 105 times through cards, phone calls, and visits. Even on the day that Paul died, our Executive Director, Ron Mathieu, was with him at his home.

LaVerne Kleinert joined our church only last November, but she needed a lot of care right away because of her cancer. Our records show that between November and March, the month she passed away, she received 34 contacts from our church through cards, visits, and phone calls.

Whether veteran member like Paul of three decades or new member LaVerne of three months, we try to minister to all needs. In a sense, we are trying to man all the lifeboats. And that can only happen if we have Jesus followers ministering to others, and not just Jesus fans in the stands applauding the work of the followers who are on the field. So be a Jesus follower, and put your faith into action. Call the office to volunteer in one of our ministries.

We didn't study the Gospel of Luke for a year and-a-half just to fill up

our intellectual understanding. We studied it to be equipped.

Jesus' ministry began in Luke chapter 4 with Jesus saying: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19

The Gospel of Luke also had the great stories about Zaccheus, the Prodigal Son, and the thief on the cross. All three needed help. All three needed salvation from the Lord.

Luke then brought us to the end where Jesus said, "Proclaim, proclaim, proclaim the good news! Be witnesses of the good news of Jesus." Jesus said we are witnesses so we all need to do something about what we have seen and heard and not keep it to ourselves. The Good News about Jesus must be shared with others in all that we do.

That is why this ocean liner called First Prez has decided to offer a wide buffet of ministry for people to serve in and to receive help. We need you!

It does say in our passage that the followers of Jesus went to worship continually and that is why attending church services and events is not a bad thing, although serving is a great thing too.

Finally Luke closes with these words from Jesus: "And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been CLOTHED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH." (Luke 24:49)

This is really a tease from Luke on his next installment called the Book of Acts. In that book, we will hear about this power from on high, which is

the Holy Spirit—the third person of the Trinity. In a few months we will go through the Book of Acts as a sermon series and there we will get a great understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit.

But before that sermon series on Acts, we will have a sermon series starting next Sunday called God's FAQ's, which will touch on the questions God asked people in the Bible, and which He continues to ask us today.

Many Christians they have been living the Christian life in first or second gear because they have not allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to be released in them. Jesus Himself said it is not just following Him that makes us complete. It is having the power from on high—the Holy Spirit active and full and released in us—that will empower us to do supernatural things, like hear His voice, be used by God to heal people, be so hospitable, merciful, creative, administrative, or generous in ways that can only be done by the Holy Spirit.

We have a Healing Service tonight at 6 pm here in the Sanctuary, and I'll be leading it. If you want to live out the words of the text to be witnesses of God's miraculous power and to see power from on high, you need to come tonight.

Put aside pride and cynicism, or maybe come anyway with your pride, cynicism, and questions and just ask God to heal you or your loved ones, then see what happens. Cynics get healed at our service all the time.

If you don't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, then I am going to bring forward right now a witness who will proclaim the truth, as Luke says. I have asked First Prez member Christina Morita to share her story of hope and encouragement with us.

She will talk about the miraculous healing she experienced because of the Holy Spirit. Please welcome Christina Morita.

My testimony of healing came after years of knowing something was not quite right with my body. I had vague symptoms for years with no medical conclusion or diagnosis. During my pregnancy, I would feel heart palpitations, exhausting fatigue, anxiety, panic attacks, and symptoms of low blood sugar, puzzling the physician. I had a 54-hour labor, and after one week at home, I quickly realized something was really wrong.

After many exhausting trips to the doctor without a medical diagnosis, I turned to our mighty God day and night requesting a healing touch. Hours turned into days and days into months with my symptoms worsening. I felt like I was on a boat day and night for four long months. I could not eat much or sleep while strictly breastfeeding. My heart would race at night, and I would wake with severe anxiety and panic attacks with numbness in my extremities and muscle spasms, which left me completely exhausted to the point where I felt I might not survive. I had lost all hope. All the while I had a newborn to care for day and night. But I clung to the promises of God in scripture for healing, faith, and overcoming fear and anxiety. I felt that I had slipped into a black hole and was sinking deeper and deeper.

I fortunately finally received a medical diagnosis after finding a specialist. With the diagnosis came many drastic lifestyle changes, particularly with my diet. All the while the symptoms were worsening. I knew a miracle was my only hope.

One Sunday morning at church it was announced there would be a healing service that evening. I had attended healing services in the past and always felt the presence of the

Holy Spirit and much love. So I attended that evening.

During the healing service, it is customary for the prayer team and Pastor Dan to mention several symptoms that God wants to heal that night to encourage those people to come forward for prayer. It's not a list for the only people who will be healed that night but a suggested list that could include at least those people.

Pastor Dan listed every symptom I had been experiencing "There is someone here with a glandular problem," he said. Then dizziness and balance issues, joint pain, ringing in the ears, and then the detailed description became so apparent that God was nudging me in my spirit to go up to request prayer. Pastor Dan and others prayed for me that evening, and I could feel a warmth come over my body.

Within three days the worst of the symptoms were almost completely resolved. I feel my healing has come in layers much like peeling an onion. Today, I have never felt better in my entire life and can say I am completely healed, restored and feel I have been made new again, redeemed! And I find God has an interesting sense of humor because today, I am privileged to share my story of healing, hope, and redemption as we are also celebrating my son's first birthday.

If you are in need of healing, whether it be physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual, I would encourage you to attend the healing service tonight at 6 pm here in the Sanctuary. May my story give you hope to witness God's miraculous powers.

And so there you have it. May we be Jesus followers and not just fans. May we rely on the power of God that comes from on high—the power of the Holy Spirit. And if needed, I hope to see

you tonight at the Healing Service. Let's pray.

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Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org. The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. It can also be sent to you by e-mail. Request the free audio version at fpchkoolau@gmail.com.