



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau  
November 6, 2016

**"Do What You Hear" (Real Faith for Real People Series)  
The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun**

**J**ames 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

*James 1:23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror;*

*James 1:24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.*

*James 1:25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.*

It's a classic phrase in the Bible – don't be just hearers of the word but be doers of the word!

Five hundred years ago almost to this day, Martin Luther, began the Reformation. The Protestants, as they would become known, split away from the Catholics. In remembrance of that day, Pope Francis traveled to Sweden last week, which is predominantly Lutheran, and met with the Archbishop of the Lutheran Church, Antje Jackelen, the Primate of the Church of Sweden, to show a stand of unity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Luther said that he didn't want the book of James, which we have been studying these months, to be included in the Bible because this phrase of needing to be a doer of the word

made it sound like your works, and not the grace of God, would get you into heaven.

Luther also fought the whole concept of Catholic indulgences, a belief that you could buy a piece of paper that guarantees you or your loved ones would go to heaven. To Luther, buying that piece of paper was a form of works. How could money buy salvation? Hence, he and others began the Protestant Reformation based on the so-called Five Solas, where "sola" is the Latin word for "only."

Here is Reformed theology, which is OUR CHURCH's theology on salvation. I will condense five years of seminary all in one minute for you. Time me! This is what is known as Reformed Theology:

- Sola Fide = "only by faith" (We get to heaven by faith alone; not by our works or our achievements.)
- Sola Gratia = "only by grace" (We are saved by grace. Salvation is a gift from God.)
- Solus Christus = "only by Christ alone" (Salvation is through Christ alone.)
- Soli deo Gloria = "glory to God alone" (We give all credit to God.)
- Sola scriptura = "by Scripture alone" (Only by Scripture do we evaluate and judge all things. It is our highest authority; not a person or an institution. The Scriptures are our constitution.)

That's the basis for Reformed

theology. Bing! One minute! Golly, I took two years of Latin and I finally got to use it in a sermon!

Presbyterian church founder John Calvin took that and emphasized that God makes the first move. God chose us first. God wants ALL to go to heaven, but only those who accept the gift of Christ will go. If we reject Christ and don't want to be with Him, then God will not force people to be with Him in heaven.

We love God because He loved us first. (1 John 4:19). It's not like we made this decision all on our own. It is by pure grace of a gift we should accept, and not by our good works, that we go to heaven.

Here is actor Joseph Fiennes as Martin Luther giving a passionate sermon on grace, as his Catholic priest heart begins to turn towards a more reformed faith. (A video clip from the movie *Luther* was shown.)

Knowing this background is important. We are saved by our faith in Christ, and not because of our works. Jesus did all the work. He died for us so we wouldn't go to hell. He loved us first. We just need to accept it.

But our reading today is saying – just hearing about Jesus and believing in Jesus is not enough. If you really are a follower of Jesus, your deeds would show it. I could have called this sermon – Get Off Your Butt! You are not to be just a hearer of the word, but a doer also!

**Y**ou see, Satan believes Jesus exists but He is not a Christian. Why not? It's because he is not doing the work of Christ. He is just a believer in the existence of Christ but works against Christ.

What about you today? Are you just a believer that Christ exists but not necessarily a follower? Or are you a doer of good deeds in His name?

Friends, there is a reason God put you here on earth. You have heard me say before that the two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you know why. If asking Christ into your life so you can go to heaven is the only reason God put us here on earth, then we should just set up a guillotine here in the sanctuary and send everyone off to heaven right now.

It's not about you having the golden ticket to get to the heavenly Willy Wonka Factory. Following Jesus is not about you getting golden tickets so YOUR agenda in life gets fulfilled. It's about giving your ENTIRE life to Christ and doing God's agenda. You are meant to do something here on earth. You're meant to be doers, and not just hearers.

Here are two questions I want us to consider today:

- Are we hearing the true Word?
- Now that we have heard the Word, what are we doing about it?

So let's start with the first question: Are we hearing or reading the Word? Or maybe I should ask— what word of God have we heard? Sometimes what we have heard about God was not really the word of God.

In the movie clip we saw, we heard Luther speaking against this image of a mean God who Luther thinks is out to get him. Many people actually believe that. I have heard many

people say recently, "For most of my life I thought God was a mean God, a punitive God, a God who was always wagging his finger in my face saying – don't do this, don't do that. He was always ready to punish me. Only since I have come to First Prez, did I learn that God is not that way at all."

Amazing, isn't it? They heard, the true word of God that said God really loves us; He is our biggest fan; He is forgiving, full of grace, and is kind, tender, and fair and wants the best for us. He is affirming and encouraging.

When God walked this earth in the form of Jesus Christ, He said He wanted to be our friend. Yes, that's the word He used – friend. Jesus said to His disciples, "No longer do I call you servants, I call you friends." (John 15:15) Servants just run around doing the bid of their master...but a friend has a more intimate relationship.

No, God's love is this: even if you don't do things the way I want, I will still love you.

Are we hearing this loving word of God? God is always with you in the darkest tunnel. As Pope Francis once tweeted, "There is no cross, big or small, in our life which the Lord does not share with us." (July 26, 2013 @Pontifex).

There is always hope. Really? Heck, the Chicago Cubs won the World Series after 108 years!

Who says there is not a God? Even when it was tied at 6-6 in the last inning, in the last game, there was still hope. And for you Cleveland fans, yes, there is a purgatory. Our prayers are with you.

But now comes the second question: Now that we have heard the Word, what are we doing about it?

Sometimes we just go to more and more Christian events, classes, and

Bible studies. Yet, often, we are not doing what we have already learned. We're simply accumulating more and more information. I say, "Let's just act on what we already know! Let us not be just hearers of the word, but be doers too."

If we have faith, there should be some evidence of it in our lives. The challenge is if we were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

If we truly have faith in Christ, there should be evidence of a person who is loving, gracious, kind, tender, and courageous. But you may ask, "Okay, if we are to do something, what are we to do? Is it doable?" Jesus said it pretty clearly in the Gospel of Matthew:

*Matt. 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.*

*Matt. 25:32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,*

*Matt. 25:33 and He will put the sheep at His right hand and the goats at the left.*

*Matt. 25:34 Then the King will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;*

*Matt. 25:35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me,*

*Matt. 25:36 I was naked and you gave Me clothing, I was sick and you took care of Me, I was in prison and you visited Me.'*

**M**att. 25:37 *Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw You hungry and gave You food, or thirsty and gave You something to drink?'*

*Matt. 25:38 And when was it that we saw You a stranger and welcomed You, or naked and gave You clothing? Matt. 25:39 And when was it that we saw You sick or in prison and visited You?'*

*Matt. 25:40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of My family, you did it to Me.'*

*Matt. 25:41 Then He will say to those at His left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from Me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;*

*Matt. 25:42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink,*

*Matt. 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me, naked and you did not give Me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'*

*Matt. 25:44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?'*

*Matt. 25:45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'*

*Matt. 25:46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

When we are to be doers of the word, know that the list is doable. So here's your starter list. There is someone who is in your family or in your school or in your office or in your

neighborhood who is hungry and thirsty, who feels like they're imprisoned, or who feels like an outcast.

Your take-away from this sermon is: Go and do a good deed this week and help them. And then do something again next week, and the week after that until it becomes a habit so that you're helping someone every week.

When we truly follow Jesus, there should be something surging inside of us that wants to go out and communicate the love and grace from God that we have experienced. When the Holy Spirit and God's love enters into us, it is like this new product Pam and I have called Soda Stream.

We bought it at Bath and Body. If you were lucky you got one at the Church Bazaar this past weekend.

The way Soda Stream works is that you get a bottle of plain tap water, and then put it into the machine where there is a long tube that goes into your bottle. Then press down on the top and boom! Carbon dioxide shoots into your plain water, changing it to carbonated water! It's fantastic. It's the frugal Chinese way of always having club soda to drink. It's better than Perrier! Better than Pellegrino! And the best part—it's free!

When we hear the Word of God and it goes into our plain soul, it is like Soda Stream. Plain water gets zapped by the Holy Spirit and it becomes the LIVING WATER of Jesus—sparkling, effervescent, bubbly, active, vital, vivacious, alive, or as Jesus once said to a woman at a well:

*John 4:10 "...If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."*

*John 4:11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well*

*is deep. Where do you get that living water?'*

*John 4:13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,*

*John 4:14 but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."*

Yes, spiritual soda stream. When you follow Jesus, boom! Your life becomes like a sparking soda stream! It's different, and it's alive. Let me tell you more about this woman at the well that we read about in the Scripture passage.

It's high noon. Hot. Jesus goes to a well called Jacob's Well in a city called Sychar. A woman of ill repute comes to the well. She is alone. No one comes to a well at high noon. Too hot. But she goes anyway because she doesn't have to face other women who shun her because of who she is. Jesus, at the well, then tells her the living water HE offers and SHE says,

*John 4:15 "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."*

*John 4:16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."*

*John 4:17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';*

*John 4:18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"*

*John 4:19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet.*

And then this woman says to Jesus later in the story:

**J**ohn 4:25 “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will proclaim all things to us.”

John 4:26 Jesus said to her, “I am He, the One who is speaking to you.”

John 4:28 ....Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,

John 4:29 “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”

Jesus knew all about this woman. He knew about her love life. He knew about her failed love life. The woman was starving for a friend. She’s a stranger in her own community. It’s like she’s been imprisoned because of her sin. Then she gets the Word from Jesus. She gets the message of love, forgiveness, and hope.

She was a hearer of the Word. She now knew about the living water by which she would never thirst again. She now got the word that Jesus is the Messiah. And how does she respond? She takes the next step and becomes a doer. She is so excited she leaves her water jar at the well, runs to the village, and says, “Come and see! Come and see! Come and see a man who told me everything. He can’t be the Messiah can he?”

Two chapters later in the Gospel of John we find that there are now 5,000 people following Jesus and eating lunch together at a luau for the Lord. I think they were there because of the woman at the well, who was one of the first converts in that area. She went around the community saying, “Come and see, come and see!”

That’s doable. You want to be a doer of the Word. Basically, all you need to say is come and see this Jesus. So here’s the deal: When we have truly heard the word, when we truly

encounter Jesus and His tremendous forgiveness and grace, just like the woman experienced, we can’t help but tell others about Jesus.

This is the essence of what it means to be a doer of the word. Ideally we should be community-centered – that we see our workplace, neighborhood, school, and home as a mission field. Wherever we work, wherever we play, wherever we live we are to be the doer of God’s word there.

To put it another way, we are to be the pastor for that area for God Himself put us in there. Anytime we hear the word or experience the word of God, it is to equip us to be better communicators of the gospel to others by our deeds, thoughts, or words. We need to be “community-centered.”

Jesus has sent us out to the community. Whenever we hear the gospel, which is the good news about Jesus, we need to take that word into our community. And we can do that by our words or by our extraordinary kindness, generosity, peace-making efforts, or servant heart. We are to be like Jesus in the marketplace, in the home, in our schools. Let’s love our city and make it better.

So when we attend a small group, a Bible study, a WAKO class, or a Life Training Class, it is not just so we could hear God’s word and learn it; it is also meant to train us so we can go out to the community and help others. Helping others is a way of loving our city, and sharing God’s love with it.

I like how Pastor Tim Shaw likens our church’s Christian education to a flight school. Much of our Bible studies is like an aviation ground school. We learn HOW TO fly, but it’s not actually flying. In ground school, we just learn how to fly.

When learning to fly a plane, ground

school leads to flight training. You’re NOT to remain on the ground. You need to get out there and actually fly a plane.

Maybe much of your time is learning ABOUT Christianity in small groups or WAKO or Life Training classes, but that is incomplete! Our Bible studies and classes should lead us to go out to the community to tell and show others the love of God. We need to put our Christian faith in action in our community. Our faith should be community-centered. It should show we love the city.

In flight training you begin flying with an instructor all the time. Then one day you are stunned when the instructor says, “Okay, you are going to fly BY YOURSELF today to get your instrument rating.”

My friend Jody, who just got her instrument rating, said this is what you discover when you first fly by yourself. And you can see that there might be a parallel for when we go out and do ministry or share our faith.

First, when flying, you say you’re not ready. You get nervous. Second, it’s always messy and nerve-wracking. You say the wrong thing to the Control Tower. The landings and take-offs are not perfect. Third, you learn a lot from the community of people with whom you would normally never hang out with on how to get better at flying. Fourth, you just have to go out and do it! Fifth, you learn to cope with things beyond your control, like when it’s wet or cloudy and you have to deal with it. You learn patience. You wait for the weather to clear before taking off.

So here’s how the metaphor works:

When you first go out into ministry, to maybe share your faith in Christ, you might say to yourself, “I’m not ready. I don’t know how to share my faith. Second, yes, It’s always messy.

**Y**ou will probably say the wrong things. Your landings and takeoffs for sharing the gospel are not perfect. Third, but you can learn a lot from the community of other believers you're with. Fourth, but in the end you just have to go out and do it. And fifth, in ministry you will surprise yourself and do things you have never done before.

Remember that for Jody she flew for MANY hours with an instructor with her. He first showed her how to fly. Then he said you fly it, and I will help you. Then it turned to "you fly and I watch."

Our passage says that those who act out their faith are blessed. But those who JUST HEAR the Word and do nothing about it, it is like looking into a mirror. Our Bible passage today says:

*James 1:23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror;*

*James 1:24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.*

Acting out our faith is like muscle memory. The more we act out on our faith, the more we remember the principles Jesus taught us. I am not saying that we have to always be sharing our faith with words. No, most of the time we need to share our faith with actions – like being kind, helpful, courteous, civil, affirming, encouraging, and not judging.

But if someone ever asks, "So how do I become a Christian," hopefully we know how to lead them towards that.

In China, I was amazed how followers of Jesus were so serious about sharing their faith with their friends and colleagues. And if they needed help in

how to lead someone to pray to receive Christ, they carried with them on their smart phones what to say. What could we put on our phones? The simple letters STP – like that fuel additive – STP.

For us in our church, if someone wants to pray to follow Jesus and commit their lives, we normally go through in our minds a simple three-step prayer to pray with someone: STP—Sorry, Thank you, Please.

SORRY for the sins I have committed.

THANK YOU for forgiving my sins.

Thank you for sending me the Holy Spirit. PLEASE come into my life because I now want to devote my life to you. Please send your Holy Spirit.

As we get ready for Communion, maybe some of you are ready to declare you want Jesus to be the center of your life. So may we pray that. That would make this Communion service so important for it will be your first communion knowing that Jesus is in your heart and He is your Lord, and friend. Let's pray.