



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau
December 11, 2016

"In His Majesty's Service" (Real Faith for Real People Series)
The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

James 2:14 *What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?*

James 2:15 Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing,

James 2:16 and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well" —but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

James 2:17 So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

James 2:18 Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."

James 2:19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.

James 2:20 How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?

The passage we just read ends with "faith without good deeds is nothing." Now that might sound like we need to be busier by doing MORE good works! But that's not right.

The point of the Christian life is not to

be busier. It is not to be a constant doer. It is to be a human being and not a human doer.

Being a Christian is not a case of neurotically running around trying to do more for God in order to please Him. Be the person God wants you to be and you will end up doing good works as a result. Why? It's because you want to please God. You want to serve Him.

Yes, or Scripture passage this morning said that if you see someone who has no food or clothes and you just say "have a good day" but don't give that person any food or clothes, THAT is NOT good. Yes, feeding and clothing those in need are good deeds we all need to be involved in. But I don't want us all to think we have to fill our calendars with more and more activities. Then we just get super stressed and, yes, neurotic.

Let me make it simple. There is just ONE GOOD WORK we need to focus on, and from that stems all other things: Just do what Christ the King says.

If we do what Jesus, our King, says, then we won't do too much or too little. Just do what Jesus says.

It is so important to fully understand that Christ is our King. Jesus is often referred to as the Lamb of God because He was like a perfectly pure sacrificial lamb who gave His life for you and me. Here is how the last book of the Bible, Revelation, refers to Jesus as the powerful Lamb of God, as He fights ungodly kings and powers:

Rev. 17:14 Together they will go to war

against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them because He is Lord of all lords and King of all kings. And His called and chosen and faithful ones will be with Him."

Rev. 19:16 On His robe at His thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

Let me put this in further context with an earthly royal metaphor. One of my favorite TV shows right now is called *The Crown*. It was produced and distributed by Netflix.

It is a series that follows Queen Elizabeth II from the time when she first becomes queen of England. It's the most expensively produced show in the history of television. \$130 million for the first season of 10 one-hour shows! The Queen's wedding dress alone in the show cost \$35,000 to make. They also made 7,000 other costumes for the series, and all of them are fantastic.

Viewers have given *The Crown* a stunningly high 9.0 IMDB rating (higher than *Downton Abbey*) and a 92 per cent Rotten Tomato excellent rating.

What's great about the show is that you see how everyone respects the Queen. She is the Sovereign. God's hand is on her. People respect her because she is the anointed one representing God, the Church, and the State.

When she walks through a hallway, people stop at attention or bow to her.

She is called “her Highness” or “Your Majesty.” She rules. Her mom has to listen to her. Her sister has to listen to her. Her husband has to kneel before her during the coronation. She rules! England’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill may head up the government, but he does not sit in her presence. He stands during their meetings.

You see, Queen Elizabeth II rules with her heritage, dignity, and character, which we learn is more important than efficiency. She rules!

We in America don’t fully understand what it means to be ruled by a king or a queen. We don’t know what it means to have a queen as part of our leadership. Our country was built on overthrowing the monarchy. We are into democracy. We are into free enterprise. We are into life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Forget the king.

But here is the reality shock. When it comes to Christianity, especially in America, we must live out the concept of a faith based on a King. Most of us make our faith based on the American Revolution, when the people in 1776 overthrew the King because they wanted self-governance.

The shock is that when it comes to following Jesus, it is about obeying Him. It is NOT about self-governance.

Christmas means the King has come. We sing “Joy to the world, the LORD has come!” He has touched down on earth in a barn in Bethlehem. He is not only a king but also THE King of Kings. He is the ultimate Lord and King.

Actually if there is any state in America who should understand monarchies it is us – Hawaii. Our heritage has Hawaiian kings and queens. What they said, ruled. They had priority wherever they walked. You couldn’t swim in their beach. You couldn’t even cross their

shadow when walking. They determined the *kapu*, which were the laws of the land and what was prohibited or allowed.

Eventually it was a Queen, Queen Ka’ahumanu, who paved the way for Christianity to come. And when she herself got baptized on Dec 4, 1825, she took the name Elizabeth! A Hawaiian queen was our country’s first and only Queen Elizabeth I. Our Hawaii royals are often pictured in British-like uniforms and dress. Our state flag has the British Union Jack on it.

But even in Hawaii, the monarchy was overthrown by a group including American expatriates with the support of John Stevens, the U.S. Minister to Hawai’i.

Americans overthrew their being ruled by the British Monarchy in 1776 and they participated in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893.

[Side Note: On Jan. 17, 1893, Queen Lili’uokalani gave up her throne under protest, with these words: “I, Lili’uokalani, by the grace of God and under the constitution of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and the constitutional government of the Hawaiian Kingdom by certain persons claiming to have established a Provisional Government of and for this Kingdom.

“That I yield to the superior force of the United States of America, whose Minister Plenipotentiary, His Excellency John L. Stevens, has caused United States troops to be landed at Honolulu and declared that he would support the said Provisional Government.

“Now, to avoid any collision of armed forces and perhaps loss of life, I do, under this protest, and impelled by said forces, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representative and reinstate me.”

Hawaii was formally annexed by the United States in 1898. It became a territory of the United States in April, 1900. [Side note: 100 years after the overthrow, on November 23, 1993, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution signed by President Bill Clinton, formally apologizing “to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the people of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii on January 17, 1893...and the deprivation of rights of Native Hawaiians to self-determination.”]

But even in Hawaii, the monarchy was overthrown by the Americans, who now had a history of overthrowing royalty. They overthrew the British Monarchy in 1776 and then they overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, formally annexing it later.

My grandfather, Kam Chow Chun, served as a teenage houseboy for the last queen of Hawaii, Queen Lili’uokalani. I don’t know how he did it, but he was able to send all of his 7 children to Punahou. His eldest son, my Uncle Ellery, was even able to go to Yale University and later returned and invented the Aloha Shirt. No kidding. Check it out on Google.

As a young boy, my grandfather served the Queen. He made cheese for her. He worked in ‘Iolani Palace. He cleaned the toilets. Yes, even in that lowly job, he served the queen even if it meant dealing with crud on a regular basis.

My grandfather was there on Jan 17, 1893 when the Queen formally lost her power. His job then was to take care of the Queen years later when she was in house arrest both in the Palace and later in what we call today as Washington Place.

Why do I bring all of this up? If we are going to follow Jesus, if we are going to grab hold of what it means to be a true follower of Christ, we have got to come to grips with the fact that Jesus is King.

The ultimate King. Are we willing to do anything for Him, even it means cleaning out crud every day?

So much of our American faith is that we think we can overrule Jesus. Sometimes we don't like what He asks us to do. We think it is a democracy where we can out vote Him. Or we question the vote that put Him in power. Or we don't like our life so we ask how many hanging chads were there in our prayer life where God gave us a raw deal. We think we can disobey when public opinion is different from what the Bible says. We complain when Jesus doesn't serve us the way we WANT to be served.

When we have pain in our lives, we might say that it's not fair and that we suffer so much, forgetting that the Bible says the servant is not higher than the master. If King Jesus did not have a pain-free life, then why should we?

When we are betrayed, why do we think it should not have happened to us when the King Jesus was betrayed? When we have physical pain why do we think that it is not right, though Jesus knew physical pain. When we think life is unfair, do we forget our King was unjustly treated in the court system, and though he was innocent he was blindfolded, then punched, then whipped then stabbed with a thorns in the temple and then crucified? So why do we think we should have it easier than our Master?

I pray that today will be a day when we remember that Jesus is our King and we need to obey Him, not partially but fully. If our King tells us to help a brother or sister who has no food or clothes, let's do it.

If our King tells us to tithe and give offerings to His church or His ministry, let's do it. When the King gives us the Ten Commandments, then follow them. Our King is not our holy butler who caters to our every whim. We even

sometimes mold Him into that and then we whine when our prayers are not answered.

It's not a democracy when it comes to being a follower of Jesus. He is King. He rules! It's not a Gallup-poll faith where I try to find more people who join me when I want to disagree with Jesus and so I follow peer pressure rather than to have the courage to follow the King. Following Jesus is not "I hope He serves ME better." No, He is the Lord; we serve Him!

And why do I serve Him? He is the only one who is trustworthy. If He is willing to give His life for me and suffer for me, then He is trustworthy. When we understand that we WANT TO obey Him not expecting any special privileges. Obeying God is the intimacy, the joy, the reward, and the fulfillment in themselves.

If we understand this, now it makes sense when we read Jesus words in the Gospel of Luke when He says:

Luke 17:7 "When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, 'Come in and eat with me'?"

Luke 17:8 No, he says, 'Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later.'

Luke 17:9 And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not.

Luke 17:10 In the same way, when you obey me you should say, 'We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.'"

Obeying God is the sufficient joy and reward that we need. Yes, obviously Jesus does, in His grace, thank us, like when He says, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

The truth of the matter is that we should live the life He has called us to, and yes sometimes He will call us to a life of pain. He will give us strength but often it is the

strength to give us a stronger back to bear our burdens; it is not removing the burdens. Yes, Jesus says He can be our friend, but He is the King who is our friend.

He is not like a buddy who plays basketball or football with you where you hit him on the butt and say, "nice play." He is still the King and needs our utmost respect. Have we as Americans forgotten what it means to revere a King?

In the Old Testament we saw how even King David would bow before the Lord. We saw how Moses took off his sandals in the presence of God at a burning bush or hid his face from His glory while in the mountains.

Have we forgotten what it means to treat God as holy? Church is indeed a fellowship but when we worship, we worship a King and need to have a sense of utmost respect for a Holy God. It's one of the reasons for our lyrics and Scripture passages on the slides, we capitalize all of the first letters of the pronouns referring to God and Jesus. We honor our King. We respect Him.

Worship is communion with God on a Sunday morning. Worship is coming into God's holy, royal presence. Do we have any sense of what it means to have reverence for royalty?

Many countries understand and have royalty – Sweden, Spain, France, Thailand, Brunei, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bhutan, Monaco, United Arab Emirates, Swaziland, Oman, even little Lichtenstein. And yes, England.

When I was a reporter for KGMB-TV News years ago, I covered for my station the arrival of Queen Elizabeth II at the Kahala Hilton Hotel in 1975. I learned a lot about reverence for the monarchy that day. Why? Because when she arrived at the hotel and got out of her car and walked to the lobby,

I went up to her and shined a portable light on her so my cameraman would get a better shot.

What I saw next was something I will never forget: a royal scowl. She showed facial distaste because I had made a faux pas. I was told later that I had walked too close to her. Royalty has a distance by which you are not to cross into their space. It is out of respect. When you deal with royalty it is a whole new game of respect.

So here is the deal with Jesus. He is royalty but He is accessible. He calls us friend; He doesn't have a bubble around Him. He loves children. He doesn't want them blocked from Him. He is the people's king. But let us not forget He is our KING. And when it comes to dealing with a King, what He says rules.

When He commands us to do something, like love our neighbor, that is not something for us to just ponder. It is a command. Do it. Like the Roman officer in the Bible who had a servant who needed healing and Jesus said "I will come and heal him." But the Roman officer responds with this:

Matt. 8:8 But the officer said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed."

Matt. 8:9 I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' & they come. And if I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it."

Matt. 8:10 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!"

Matt. 8:13 Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, "Go back home."

Because you believed, it has happened." And the young servant was healed that same hour.

"Just say the word." We should have that attitude, of "just say the word, Jesus, and I will do it." You want me to forgive someone I will do it. You want me to RECEIVE forgiveness I will do it. You want me to be more loving in my company I will do it. You want me to NOT cheat at work or be nicer to my friends or spouse or kids, I will do it because you are my King. You want me to serve, I will do it.

What about volunteering for ministry? Will you serve? One of the greatest needs in our church is to have ushers for our 11:11 service. We desperately need more. It is so low in the ranks that we are presently using staff to help usher, but I don't think you want to keep using your paid staff to do that. Perish the thought that we would say, "People don't want to volunteer so we pay our pastors and directors to usher." If you pray and you hear God the King saying, "I am asking you to usher," then please do so.

It is such a high calling, and I will personally train the ushers in the second weekend of January. There is a fee, since it is a program of Hawaiian Islands Ministries, but the church can pay your fee if you really want to serve as an usher or be part of the other Red Carpet teams.

How important is ushering? People decide in the first few minutes if they will ever come again to church and it has all to do with hospitality and nothing to do with the music or preaching. That's how critical it is.

If you can serve and honor God in this capacity of ushering, call my office. Please consider being a welcoming gatekeeper in the house of our Lord. As the Bible says:

Psalm 84:10 A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked.

Jesus is our King who knows every-thing and He is the one who can control our

lives. And we can either get with His program or live an unfulfilled life? I know this is everything that cuts across our American maverick spirit.

As I said, those in the military get it. If an Admiral or a general tells them to do something they do it. No questions. They get the chain of command. When it comes to follow Jesus the King it is easier for them to understand that.

Civilians have a harder time with that. We were taught to be our own man or worse yet to "stick it to the man." But our faith is about allegiance to Jesus for He is really the One who has the power, the wisdom, the love, and the track record of sacrifice for us.

People who do ceramics might get this better. Here is what the Bible says in the book of Isaiah:

Is. 29:15 What sorrow awaits those who try to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their evil deeds in the dark! "The LORD can't see us," they say. "He doesn't know what's going on!"

Is. 29:16 How foolish can you be? He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you, the clay! Should the created thing say of the one who made it, "He didn't make me"? Does a jar ever say, "The potter who made me is stupid"?

God is the Potter. He is not stupid. And we the clay need to know that the Potter is the one in true control. Don't call Him stupid.

When we don't do what Jesus says, then we are in essence calling Him stupid, and we know better how to run our life. We, the clay, think we can mold ourselves. We think that we can be the master of our own fate the captain of our own soul. Really? Now who is being stupid?

The Christmas story is that finally after millennia of history, the true King has come to earth. Like in the story of Robin Hood, King Richard has returned to England, to take back his country from the evil Sheriff of Nottingham and Prince John.

Jesus Christ the King has come to fight against the imposter Prince Satan who is trying to rule the world.

So, Christmas it is not just a Hallmark Card. Rather it means the true King has returned and the battle to take back the world continues. We must remember that God is as the Hallelujah chorus says – King of Kings, Lord of Lords And He shall reign forever, and ever, Hallelujah.

I want to close with this thought. It is important as we always are transparent and authentic of what is happening in our church and what challenges face us.

Our church has been serving this community at great cost – in time, talent and treasure. Serving the poor, the homeless, building a home for those with less opportunity; being champions for those being oppressed; educating our children, young adults, boomers and senior citizens in the faith; caring for those who hurt; praying for healing; helping marriages, helping those who are single, and supporting those who are sick and in need emotionally, physically spiritually.

Many are coming to Christ. Many having their faith renewed. More than 160 were baptized in just the last two years with another 270 renewal of baptismal vows – for a total of 436 people. That's like a whole new church.

But this ministry of doing faith with much good works has come at great cost. If you looked at the bulletin, we are facing an operational deficit of more than 400,000—the largest ever

in our church history at this point of the fiscal year.

Next Sunday is the last Sunday of three services. The Sunday after that is Christmas and while hundreds of people worship that day in just one service, many of our people choose to stay home. So I want to communicate this need and reality to you all in a transparent way so that no one says to me later, “Gee, Dan, why didn’t you tell us? We would have responded if you just told us.”

So the facts are: We have a large deficit, greatest ever for our church. Our fiscal year ends Dec. 31.

Second, we only have one more full Sunday this year of three services because of Christmas landing on a Sunday. If every regular attender chipped in \$300 in addition to what they would usually give, we would erase that deficit. But realizing that many can't afford that, we need others to be even more generous to make up for that.

I believe our church is special and needed in this community. Our heart is huge for those who have been hurt in life. We are a hospital for those in need but also a training hospital in that we equip our people to go out and minister to others in a thoughtful and effective way. But in order to continue in healthy fashion, if we need to erase the deficit. If we don't by year's end, it will mean we will need to take out a loan to continue operations.

On one hand there is much for which to say thank you to you. We raised this year enough pledges to end our bank loan on the property, and half of the money pledged has come in, so thank you! Last year, you were all so generous in that we raised enough to pay our \$300-thousand fee to get out of our former denomination so we could own our property.

However, if we don't erase this year's operational deficit, we will need to start a new loan for operations. We gave our church attenders a year to complete their pledges. But for the immediate future, in

the next two to three weeks, we will need your help to take care of the deficit of our operational budget.

I am telling you of the reality of our situation. I am not trying to pressure you to do something you don't want to do or are unable to do. But I felt I needed to fully disclose the reality of the situation. And even more importantly, I don't want you to do anything that our Lord and King doesn't want you to do. Hence, I am asking for this one simple thing:

Just pray.

Just pray to the Lord this week, and do whatever the King tells you to do. Do it in obedience. Don't do more or sacrifice more than He wants you to, or don't do less than what He asks you to do. Go to our website for more information on the many ways to give.

If you can't help, then don't, and please don't feel guilty. For you are doing it out of obedience of what He is telling you to do. If you are behind in your tithes, or if you can help, then this is the time to follow through. Just do what the King tells you to do.

He is our King. He is our Lord. May we live a life of total obedience. I would rather a life with Him full of adventure and uncertainty and accomplishment than one without Him that is always predictable. Hail to the King. And God save the church! Amen!

Let's pray. Dear Lord and Savior, our true King, we thank You for all you have done for us. We have dedicated our lives to You. When You came at Christmas, You came as a babe and lived in a servant manner. But You were our King. To You in this worship, we hail You as our King. We hail You as our royal friend. We hail You as the Lord of Lords, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In Your name we pray, Amen.