

Sermon Series: “Intentional Disciples–Purposeful Service”–Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN–4/23/2006

Title: “Does of the Word”

Text: James 1: 21-25

Intro.: *Ills.: Exhilarating Obedience*

Theme: When we have **HEARD** all of what God has done for us in Jesus, the natural response is joyfully to **DO** the faith by striving to be aligned with God’s will as expressed in His Word.

Understanding who is doing the acting (Print and read James 1: 21-22)

- It takes your God and Savior to get faith and action done in your life
 1. *For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philip. 2:13*
 2. When we confuse this, we live under crushing guilt or in faith-strangling self-righteousness
- It takes a continued and consistent dwelling in his Word to begin and complete your saving faith
 1. *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Rom. 10:17*
 2. *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim 3: 14-15*
 3. Never getting to the point where we “**graduated**” from learning about the wonders of God and faith
- Turning on the engine of your faith in Jesus
 1. *So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; Philip. 2:12*
 2. **Ills.: Hearing and Obeying**

Not settling for anything less than what Jesus wants for me (Print and read James 1: 23-25)

- Hearing without acting upon your faith says volumes about who you think you are
 1. It says that you are self-contained and have no need to hear what God has to say to and for you
 2. It says that your faith is more about image than transformation in Christ
 - a. *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Rom 12: 2*
 - b. *If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. James 1:26*
- Being who you have been made to be in Christ
 1. A freed sinner
 - a. **Illus.: Seeking or just looking**
 - b. Looking into the mirror of God’s law and not being afraid to see our weakness and sin
 - i. We can live in denial of it (*forgetful hearer*) and forge ahead in destructive life-styles, relationships, conduct.
 - ii. Or we can **humbly receive** it in thankfulness for a Savior who came to save not judge us
 - iii. *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. J3:17*
 - c. Looking into the mirror of God’s Word and being afraid to become lost in Christ
 - i. *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20*
 - ii. **Ills.: Less is more**
 2. A freed servant
 - a. Freed up to follow the Law of Christ (*Bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ. Gal 6:2*)
 - b. The *perfect law* is **love God with reckless abandon** and **love your neighbor unconditionally**
 - c. **Not earning anything** but **offering everything** to God as a sacrifice of praise
 - d. *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1: 27*
 - e. **Ills.: Foster on service**
 3. A freed saint
 - a. *Makarios* = blessed state of being = the reality of what Heaven will be in perfection (*on earth as in heaven*)
 - b. We are called to be the saints (holy people) whom Christ has saved us to be
 - c. **Ills.: Oliver Cromwell: Melt down the saints and put them into circulation**

Exhilarating Obedience

Freedom does not mean the absence of constraints or moral absolutes. Suppose a skydiver at 10,000 feet announces to the rest of the group, "I'm not using a parachute this time. I want freedom!" The fact is that a skydiver is constrained by a greater law--the law of gravity. But when the skydiver chooses the "constraint" of the parachute, she is free to enjoy the exhilaration. God's moral laws act the same way: they restrain, but they are absolutely necessary to enjoy the exhilaration of real freedom. **Colin Campbell, Englewood, Colorado, Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 1.**

Hearing and Obeying

Robert Kupferschmid was an 81-year old with no flying experience. However, due to a tragic emergency, he was forced to fly an airplane. On June 17, 1998, he and his 52-year-old pilot friend, Wesley Sickle, were flying from Indianapolis to Muncie, Indiana. During the flight, the pilot slumped over and died at the controls. The Cessna 172 single-engine plane began to nose-dive and Kupferschmid grabbed the controls. He got on the radio and pleaded for help. Nearby were two pilots who heard the call. Mount Comfort was the closest airport, and the two pilots gave Kupferschmid a steady stream of instructions of climbing, steering—and the scariest part—landing. The two experienced pilots circled the runway three times before this somewhat frantic and totally inexperienced pilot was ready to attempt the landing. Emergency vehicles were called out and ready for what seemed like an approaching disaster. Witnesses said the plane's nose nudged the center line and bounced a few times before the tail hit the ground. The Cessna ended up in a patch of soggy grass next to the runway. Amazingly, Kupferschmid was not injured. This pilot listened and followed those instructions as if his life depended on it—and it did. Imagine what would take place in the lives of believers if we listened to and obeyed the Word of God with the same earnestness. **Gregg Donnelly, Maple Plain, Minnesota**

Seeing or Just Looking

Andras Tamas is the name officials gave a certain man decades ago in a Russian psychiatric hospital. He'd been drafted into the army, but the authorities had mistaken his native Hungarian language for the gibberish of a lunatic and had him committed. Then they forgot about him. For 53 years. A few years ago a psychiatrist at the hospital began to realize what had happened and helped Tamas recover the memories of who he was and where he came from. He recently returned home to Budapest as a war hero, "the last prisoner of World War II." Not only had this man forgotten his real name, he hadn't even seen his own face in five decades. So, according to one news account, "For hours, the old man studies the face in a mirror. The deep-set eyes. The gray stubble on the chin. The furrows of the brow. It is his face, but it is a startling revelation." Imagine looking at your own face in a mirror and not recognizing it. James 1:22-25 says that is just what people are doing when they listen to God's Word but do not obey it. There, right before their eyes in Scripture, is an accurate reflection of themselves. But they don't truly see—with the eyes of their hearts—what the Bible shows them.

Tom Hundley, Chicago Tribune (9-6-00); submitted by Lee Eclow, Lake Forest, Illinois

Less is more

The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather, he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God has declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is, in the sight of God, more important than angels. ... He knows well that the world will never see him as God sees him and he has stopped caring. **A. W. Tozer in The Pursuit of God. Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 8**

Service

Self-righteous service comes through human effort. True service comes from a relationship with the divine Other deep inside. Self-righteous service is impressed with the "big deal." True service finds it almost impossible to distinguish the small from the large service. Self-righteous service requires external rewards. True service rests contented in hiddenness. Self-righteous service is highly concerned about results. True service is free of the need to calculate results. Self-righteous service picks and chooses whom to serve. True service is indiscriminate in its ministry. Self-righteous service is affected by moods and whims. True service ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need. Self-righteous service is temporary. True service is a life-style. Self-righteous service is without sensitivity. It insists on meeting the need even when to do so would be destructive. True service can withhold the service as freely as perform it. Self-righteous service fractures community. True service, on the other hand, builds community.

Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline, "The Discipline of Service."

James 1:21-25

²¹In humility receive the word implanted, which is powerful to save you souls ²²Do what God's word says. Don't merely listen to it, or you will fool yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and abides in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.