

“But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers . . .”

Here's something we may not say as directly or as often as we should: THANK YOU.

Thank you for being here today and every Sunday.

Of all the places you could be (including still in bed), thank you for making the effort to *be here*.

It's important to be here together on Sundays and I admit that one of my favorite things is hearing people say that they feel they've really missed something when they've missed a Sunday.

So thank you.

Thanks be to God *for* you.

Having said that, and meant it from the bottom of my heart, here's something else I feel just as strongly:

Sunday is not the only time of the week we practice our faith.

And this beautiful church is not the only place we worship God.

Our time together here is essential in that it equips us to live our faith *outside* these walls every day, every moment of our lives.

We get there by being here together.

Studying the example of God's Word made flesh, Jesus, and the word of God in scripture, few more direct than today's epistle from James, the brother of Jesus.

Here in the opening of his book James reminds us that every perfect gift is from God –

every moment, every challenge, every encounter –

all invitations to share the love that God gives us.

All opportunities to put what we've learned in church into action.

“Be ye doers of the word not hearers only,”

writes James, brother of our Lord.

This phrase is plastered all over my sister's church,

St. James', Richmond.

Their website is doers.org. (*I know...*)

The phrase is at the top of their webpage.

And on the arch over the chancel it says – you guessed it:

“Be ye doers of the word not hearers only.”

I see the value of being immersed in that saying each Sunday as you, literally, hear the word proclaimed.

But if I ruled the world, do you know where I might put that saying?

Over the doors leading *out* of church.

Let them be the last thing we see as we go out to our daily lives.

“Be ye doers of the word not hearers only.”

In a sense we already do that, don't we?

In the dismissal when we say,

“Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!”

Really, we're promising each other that,

having been here supporting one another to hear God's word,

we'll now go out to be doers of that word.

We'll share that word in our own way with others.

This week, guaranteed, you'll find yourself in a situation –

or probably many different situations –

that need a “word of truth”, as James says.

You may “do” the word this week in something as simple as a smile.

Or maybe you'll “do” the word by holding your tongue.

Maybe you'll make a tough decision.

Stretch yourself to try something new or uncomfortable.

Speak a hard truth – or receive one.

And, well, opportunities and moments all your own. . .

And in that moment, by the grace of God,

chances are you'll do what needs to be done.

You'll do the work God has given you to do.

You won't do it to get God's attention or favor

(because you already have that, by grace.)

You'll do it because you've heard the word of God,

the “word of truth”

proclaimed here in so many different ways.

Deep down, you know that God created us
not to be passive hearers of the word, but doers –
people, beloved by God, who *do stuff*
that mirrors God's love for the world.

Every so often we have folks stand up and commission them
for various roles – choristers, vestry, special committees, new staff, etc.
It occurs to me that it's high time we were commissioned
for the important work we all share.

Would you please stand?

**Dear Companions in Christ, in the name of this Church,
I commission you to go forth into the world this week
forgiven, healed and loved,
ready to mirror God's perfect gifts
wherever you go,
with whomever you meet, especially the most vulnerable.
For by the grace of God we are doers of the word, not hearers only.
In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.**

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