



“It Takes More than Words...”

Biblical Text: I John 3:18-24

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*My message today is this: **“It Takes More than Words,”** from I John 3:18-24.

I think it fits right in with Old Mission Church’s Statement of Purpose, which is: *
“Loving God. Loving People.” And that comes right out of the Scriptures:*

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.”¹ Those are Jesus’ words from Luke 10:27.

It also is right in line with our Vacation Bible School theme, ***DOSOMETHINGKC** which is based on this Bible Verse from our text for this morning - I John 3:18.

* **“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”**²

This whole series, like our Vacation Bible School is based on the idea that those of us who are followers of Jesus are supposed to put our faith to work. All month long in this series and the entire week of VBS we’ll be meeting some of the people from Kansas City and Old Mission who are living out that verse on a daily basis.

One of them is *Maija Dietheim. People may know her as a *restaurateur from the Westport area or as the owner of *Anedore’s Fine Chocolates in * Westwood. **And let’s face it – who doesn’t like chocolate?** But you may not know that Maija makes a difference every day by giving back to others. Listen to her witness. *

She is passionate about giving back through * **n2n** (Neighbor to Neighbor) – which is a not-for-profit organization in Westport which is fulfilling Jesus teaching in Matthew 25. He says that when we provide *clothing, or *food and dignity to people, even those we might call “the least of these,” we are really serving him.

We don’t all have to serve where Maija serves, and we aren’t all able to do what she does, but that’s not what God requires. But we all can ***do something** - KC!

And there are two things we all can do that are in our text today. ***“This is his commandment: that we should believe in his Son, Jesus Christ *and that we should love one another, just as he has commanded us.”**³ (1 John 3:23)

¹ Luke 10:27, paraphrased from the Bible by the author.

² I John 3:18, New Revised Standard Version, Copyright © 2000 by the National Council of Churches, used by permission.

³ Ibid. I John 3:23. NRSV.

All of us who are followers of Jesus should do those two thing things also. We should have **faith**, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we should love others, doing the **works** that faith requires in our daily lives.

But which is the most important? *Faith or Works? And which one comes first?

Those questions put us right in the middle of a debate as old as Christianity and as current as the latest news cycle about one of the reasons increasing numbers of young people are questioning the role and place of religion in their lives.

You'll find it in the Bible and the history of Christianity. One of the reasons Martin Luther didn't like the New Testament Book of James was this verse, James 2:14:

* **"What good is it, if you say you have faith but do not have works?"**

* **"Can faith alone save you?"**⁴ (James 2:14)

How would you answer James' question? Martin Luther, John Wesley and other reformers would say: **"YES, absolutely."** It's in Ephesians 2:8:

* **"By grace you have been saved through faith."** ...and...

* **"This is not your own doing; It is the gift of God."**⁵

And notice that Paul continues to make it plain that works do not save us.

* **"It is not the result of works, so that no one may boast."**⁶ Ephesians 2:9

But if we stop there, we stop too soon. Our good works may not save us, but we can't leave them out either, saying, *"Me and Jesus, we've got everything settled!"*

No. Faith may save us, but it won't save the world! Listen to how Paul continues:

* **"For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works."**

* **"God has prepared this beforehand to be our way of life."**⁷ (Ephesians 2:10)

God's design is that ***faith and works** are essential for those who follow Jesus.

Let's go back to how James 2:15-17 puts it:

* **"If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them,**

* **'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill, and yet do not supply their bodily needs...'**

* **"What is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."**⁸

Faith and works go together, like two sides of the same coin, like breathing in and breathing out! Which is most important sort of depends on which you did last.

⁴ Ibid. James 2:14, NRSV

⁵ Ibid. Ephesians 2:8, NRSV

⁶ Ibid. Ephesians 2:9, NRSV

⁷ Ibid. Ephesians 2:10, NRSV

⁸ Ibid. James 2:15-17, NRSV

That's really what the Book of James is talking about: ***“Show me your faith apart from your works, and I, by my works, will show you my faith.”**⁹ (James 2:18)

That's what I'm talking about too, when I say. *** “It Takes More than Words...”**

In this series, we'll be looking at all kinds of places where we are turning faith into action: ***Our partnership with Roseland Elementary, * serving food to underserved people through the JoCo Food Ministry and Crosslines, *building houses with Habitat, and our VBS kids will even get to meet our *local major league canine mascots, Sluggerrr from the Royals, KC Wolff from the Chiefs and Blue from KC Sporting, who with their teams are all giving back something to KC.**

WORKS are important, not just WORDS. But sometimes people take it too far. There's a “sound bite” that is quoted around the web and other places. Maybe you've heard it. *** “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use Words if necessary.”**

It is attributed to ***St. Francis of Assisi.** The problem is, ***he never said it.** A better way to capture his spirit is this, not Francis of Assisi, but Michael of Old Mission: *** “Preach the Gospel at all times. Words are necessary. And so are Works.”**

What St. Francis of Assisi did say was this: ***“No Brother should preach contrary to the doctrines of the Church. *But let the Friars also preach by their deeds.”**
(Rule of 1221, Chapter XII)

Words are important. They are. ***Without them people don't have any idea why we are doing what we do for the sake of following Jesus.** Just so, also, unless people see us **doing something** our words can seem empty. **Words and Works.** Which should come first? I don't think God cares, do you? Both are essential.

I learned that when I first heard my favorite quotation about faith and works from Dr. H. Eddie Fox. It changed my perspective and my faith when I heard him say:

*** “To give a cup of cool water to those who are thirsty, and not name the name of Jesus, * ...is simple social service, and many people do that. And it is a good work.”**

*** “To name the name of Jesus, without giving a cup of cool water to those who are thirsty?” * “That is an abomination in the sight of Almighty God.”**

*** “To give a cup of cool water to those who are thirsty while we name the name of Jesus?” * “Well, friends, that is the hope of the world!”**

I still believe that. I hope you do, too. ***Do Something KC! It's our turn.**

⁹ Ibid. James 2:18, NRSV