

We had an excellent S.S. class this morning based on C.S. Lewis  
The Lion, The Witch, & The Wardrobe. One of the things we discussed  
was how what we believe is true affects our actions. As long  
we believe the word of God we hear is true ... How does it affect our actions.  
My sermon is based on the Epistle lesson ... led us pray.

### The Passionate People

A sermon preached on the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 8, 1985, at Knox Presbyterian Church by the Revd. Theodore S. Atkinson. Scripture Lessons: Proverbs 2:1-8; Psalm 119:129-136; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:31-37.

Here's a sleepy eyed man glancing casually at himself in the bathroom mirror one morning. He merely glances and doesn't notice his stubbly beard and disshevelled hair. He looks at himself and goes off to work looking like the wild man of Borneo. It's possible to hear the Word of God like that. We hear the word but we don't do it. We leave church like a man going off to work unshaved with sleepers in his eyes.

But this morning I'm proposing two ways that you can better hear and do the word. In the light of our special evangelistic services coming up in two weeks I think both these events will contribute to the overall hoped for results of new life in Christ. ~~After you've heard the word of God~~ preached this morning I'm going to ask you to do something. I'm going to ask you to attend one or both of the introductory meetings which are explained more fully in your bulletin inserts.

The practice of prayer is one of the top two priorities of our church. We all know that the Word of God tells us to pray, but so often we fail in practice. To help us obey, a special 6 week adventure is offered for Wednesday evenings. These sessions are meant to help people learn to practice prayer in a simple, practical way. I'm asking that you sign your name on the tear off sheet indicating your intention to come on September 25 to the introductory meeting. I'm not asking you to commit yourself to the six sessions, but just the introductory session. Then I want you to place your name in the collection plate as part of your offering to God. This will help give me an idea how many to expect and whether we'll need child care.

Christian nurture is also a top priority of our church. We want Christians to grow spiritually. We grow spiritually by hearing and doing the Word of God. The person who only hears the word of God, but doesn't do it will never grow spiritually. James tells us that 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. In other words we grow as Christians, not by hearing more sermons, but by hearing and doing.

To help us all grow as Christians an exciting 12 session Bible study is being offered in which we'll explore how to become one of God's passionate people. We'll not simply hear the word but we'll commit ourselves, week by week, to do the word, perhaps by looking after an orphan or visiting a ~~widow or helping a refugee.~~ We'll learn better how to give and receive help and love. And perhaps most importantly we'll discover how to help Knox church become a dynamic agent of change in our community so that people will say of our church, "They not only believe the Word of God, they practice it."

I'm not asking you now to attend all 12 sessions. That's a big commitment. I'm asking you to make just a little commitment. I'm asking you to attend the introductory meeting next Sunday evening, September 15 at 6:30 PM in the Church Library. I believe this study has the potential of being one of the most significant turning points in the history of Knox church.

Hearing and doing. These two things are not only absolutely necessary for Christian life and growth, they're absolutely essential to the experience of Christian freedom as well. James says, "the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to *do* this,

not forgetting what he has heard, but *doing* it-- he will be blessed in what he does." When we do the word of God as well as hear it we discover a degree of freedom that we've never had before.

Let me illustrate. Last fall Kay and I took ball-room dancing lessons for 10 weeks at Hoover school. We began by listening to our instructor. She explained the steps for the fox trot; left foot step, right foot step, slide and together. Then she demonstrated the step with her partner as we looked on intently. But then she made us do what we'd heard and seen.

What a disaster that proved to be. I had the words of the instructor in my head, but they weren't in my feet. I look intently at how the instructors danced with so much freedom, but when I tried it was like I had two left feet. What a disappointment when Kay and I began to do what we'd heard. We stepped all over one another's feet. I'd go one way and she'd go another. We'd stop and argue and blame one another for our mistakes. I was at the point of giving up altogether. I felt like I'd never learn. I didn't look forward to the second lesson. I felt I was getting nothing out of the lessons.

But as we continued week after week something wonderful began to happen. We *heard* the word and *looked intently* at the instructor and then we practiced. And ever so slowly we began to move more and more in harmony. It was wonderful. I began to feel graceful. I felt full of grace. I felt that Kay and I were really getting our act together. We began to anticipate one another's moves. We began to experience freedom; not freedom to do anything we felt like. We'd have stepped all over one another's feet if we'd done that. But when we intently followed the word of the instructor and moved our feet exactly as we'd heard we experienced freedom. The word was not only in my head, it began to enter my feet.

That's what happens when a man or woman hears the word of God, and does it. It must enter not only our ears but our feet as well. It's difficult at first. We feel like giving up. We feel like we're getting nothing out of the lessons. But we hang in there. And ever so slowly we begin to make progress. We stop stepping on one another. We stop pulling in different directions. We're quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. We begin to work together gracefully. We experience freedom. Our families begin to work better. Our jobs take on new meaning. We begin to care for refugees, orphans, and widows; we begin to want to take a stand against the injustice and oppression of the world. We begin to want to get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent in the world and in ourselves. And as our ears are opened to hear the Word of Christ, like the man in the Gospel lesson, we become more fluent in our ability to share the Gospel with friends and neighbors in winsome and winning ways.

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." The Word tells us to pray. We know what the word says but we so often get discouraged when we begin to obey. We try praying and get nothing out of it. We stumble and fall in our attempts like Kay and I originally did when we were learning how to dance. But slowly we will experience freedom to pray as we, together, hear the word and then practice praying together. So let's commit ourselves to coming to that introductory meeting on prayer on Wednesday evening, September 25, at 7 PM to see how we can learn better how to pray together and by ourselves.

The Word also tells us that religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless goes beyond prayer and entails social action; looking after orphans and widows, taking a stand against injustice, witnessing to

the love and justice of God. Let's come to the introductory meeting next Sunday night to look into a 12 session class in which we'll learn how to do that better. I urge you to sign your name and place it in the offering.

I hope you'll commit yourselves to both introductory meetings. But if you can't commit yourselves to both than will you, at least, commit yourself to one? If you can't commit yourself to either, will you at least resolve to take some other small step this morning in response to the Word of God. Commit yourselves to be faithful in worship on Sunday mornings for the next month. Commit yourselves to come to the next four Sunday School classes on The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe. Commit yourselves to bringing a friend to the evangelistic service on September 22. Commit yourselves to visiting a shut-in this month. Write a card to someone hospitalized. Take your mother in law out to dinner. No matter how small and insignificant the action might be, do something. Take a step to become one of God's passionate people. "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only."

Let us pray: Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.