

“Just Looking”

Date: Sept. 11, 2011

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: James 1:17-27

Theme: Christian Education, faith in action

Occasion: Christian Education Sunday

We’ve all been in the mall, or in a department store, when a sales clerk comes up and asks, “May I help you?” If that sales clerk makes their living on commission, how discouraging it must be for them to hear the words, “No thanks. Just looking.”

“Just looking.” What it means is “Leave me alone.” Sometimes we go “just looking” because we’re bored and want something to do. We go to the store or to the mall just to walk around. Or maybe we go “just looking” to tantalize our fantasies. We don’t have any intentions of buying anything. We just want to look.

How many young ladies have gone to a jewelry store, trying on expensive rings, bracelets and necklaces, just to see how they would look wearing them. Or, how about those guys who go to the show room of a car dealership, checking out the latest models of cars, that they won’t be buying. The sales clerk may turn on the charm, but these folks reply, “No thanks. Just looking.”

Some people spend their whole lives “just looking.” Never willing to make a commitment, or invest their energy in something permanent. Some people drift from job to job, looking for the right one that never comes along. Then, there are those who move in and out of relationships, never daring to really fall in love.

And then, there are those people who drift in and out of church, without ever opening their hearts to the living spirit of God. They have been doing this for years. *They* have been in church. But *God* has never gotten into them. They can’t, or they won’t allow themselves to feel the pulse of the body of Christ. “They’re just looking.”

It's kind of like our buddy who climbed the mountain looking for the meaning of life. (Reference: the skit "Give us this day our daily guacamole?") The answer that he was looking for was right there in his Bible. He had actually opened his bible and read it, on occasion. But he never let the words of the Bible shape his life. They were just words. But they never really got down deep into his soul.

The apostle James, the brother of Jesus, has a word to say about this situation. He's talking directly to those folks who call themselves Christian, but who won't let the Lord Jesus shape and form their lives. James reminds them, and he reminds us, that it is not enough merely to *hear* the good news. We must also be *doers* of the Word.

Faithful Christians must put their faith into action. To be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ we cannot be a bystander, watching someone else do all the action. We cannot be bench-warmers, sitting on the sidelines. Faithful Christians are in the game of life, putting their faith into action, in all of life. We are *doers* and not merely *hearers*.

People ought to be able to tell that you're different because Jesus is your Lord. If we are Christians, it should show. People ought to be able to recognize the love of Jesus that lives in our hearts. People will know. We won't have to go around telling people that we're followers of Christ; they will be able to see it with their own eyes.

There is so much hurt in the world today. God needs people who will love the hurting. God is calling on His people to feed the hungry, to comfort the broken-hearted, to spend time with the children, to visit the sick, to love the ones that others find unlovable. God is calling us to be His Church. God is calling us into action.

No more inactive-duty Christians. We are all called to use our spiritual gifts, whatever they may be, in the service of the Lord. We are the King's soldiers, called not to fight with guns and bombs, but with love and kindness and charity. We are called to fight evil with good, and to do so in the name of Jesus, the King of kings.. In the King's army, there is no time for "just looking."

The Lay Leadership Committee is in the midst of its fall recruiting process. They're starting to have a difficult time finding willing volunteers. Oh, there's a core group of people that is quite active at Lakewood. But there are many who are on the roll at Lakewood who are simply unavailable. There's work to be done for the Lord, and they're missing in action. "Don't count on me," is their reply.

I'm issuing a clarion call to all the members of Lakewood. We need every one of you to discover and use your spiritual gift for the Lord. God has given each and every one of us something to contribute to the work of Jesus Christ. Our gifts are different from one another.

But none of us should ever say, "I'm just looking. I'm here to get my needs met, but I don't want to get involved." An inactive Christian is an oxymoron. It doesn't make sense. You can't be a follower of Jesus Christ and not get involved, some how.

The needs of the world are too great for any of us to stand around, just looking.

Now, that being said, there may not be time for looking around, but there is definitely time for getting ready. No soldier goes into battle without proper training. No football team goes onto the field to play an opponent without spending weeks, if not months, in practice. We Christians also need to get ready for action.

Today is our Kick-Off to Christian Education Sunday. We also call it Rally Day. We are rallying the troops for Jesus Christ. Calling people to prepare

themselves for the active life of serving Jesus Christ. This is the day that we rally people back to the classes and the study groups that we were involved in last winter and spring. Ideally, we should never take a break from our studies. But we do. And now is the time to get ready for action again.

I'm not going to do a commercial for each and every class and study group that we offer here at Lakewood. The information is in the bulletin. Or, you can speak to Sandi Hess or to myself to find out more about our Christian Education opportunities. There is something here for everyone - from preschool to the oldest adult in the church.

Again the words of James echo in my ears. A lot of you will nod your head and say to yourself, "That's nice. I'm glad there's something there for those other people. But I'm just not interested." I'm sorry, but there isn't time for people to just look, to notice what Lakewood has to offer, but to not get involved.

Please, get into the game. Get involved in the life of the church. These classes and groups do more than just pass along information. It is in these groups that we form friendships that often times last for a life time. We find people that we can trust. And in our times of deepest distress, these are the people who will reach out in love to us.

Please don't sit there and be so presumptuous as to say, "I don't need that." So much arrogance and pride, in such a comment. We all need a little help in our Christian journey. We all need to study to grow in our knowledge of Jesus, and what He expects of us. We all need a little help in understanding this book, called the Bible.

My friends, the secret to a happy life is not found in a recipe for guacamole! It is found in the book of life - the Bible. But it's not the easiest book in the world

to understand. Let's get together with other Christians, and ask our questions. Let's find out what the meaning of life is, together.

Christian education is not merely collecting useless information about the Bible. It is about the transformation of lives. We are in the business of making disciples for the transformation of the world. I believe that the process of making disciples happens in small groups. In Sunday school classes. In youth group. In Kids on a Mission.

No more "Just Looking." Let's get involved. It's not information; it's transformation. It's not the creeds; it's the deeds. It's not the talk; it's the walk. It's not the notion; it's the motion. Can the preacher get an Amen? Faith without action is dead. So, let's be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Amen? Amen!