

Sermon Pentecost 3C  
Luke 9:51-62  
Pastor Dave Wegner  
June 30, 2019

**Think about your life last week.**

**Think about what you did, what you ate and where,  
Try to remember how you felt after a nap,  
Or a good night's sleep...  
Or maybe you had several bad nights of sleep.**

**Think about who you talked with last week.**

**Did you have a meaningful conversation with a spouse?  
Or did you fight with a friend?  
Think about your workplace and the people in it.**

**Now if you can, try to think of a single word that you remember  
Hearing, or saying, or thinking last week.**

**A word that stands out among the many that were spoken.**

**It might be easy or it might be a bit challenging...**

**A study of around 400 adults, male and female, found that  
The average person says 16,000 words in a single day,  
So there are plenty to choose from.**

**I was able to think of a word that I remember from last week.**

**In fact, it was a contraction I often said to our children  
As we enjoyed a week together at Camp Lutherdale  
With four of our confirmation students:  
"Don't."**

**Don't climb that brick retaining wall,  
Don't go too far into the lake,  
Don't hit your sister.**

**Don't make so much noise in the communal living spaces.  
That last one at least got them to stop wailing on each other  
As they pondered what in the world "communal" meant.**

**In a bout of parental hindsight angst, I am starting to regret  
How many times I said "don't" and how few times, "do,"  
Stifling the wild and free experience of camp,  
But then again, they really were being quite boisterous  
In the lodge.**

**I was talking to an acquaintance of mine recently  
And quickly discovered the word he will always remember  
From the 112,000 words in one week: terminal.**

**His grandmother had just been diagnosed with  
An aggressive, untreatable cancer.**

**A word with the power to stop us cold in our tracks,  
A power to stop the world from turning.  
A power to steal our spirit, our hope, our future,  
Right out from under us.**

**I'm LEAVING you, I'm PREGANT, you're FIRED, it's a BOY,  
We're going a different DIRECTION, Mom is SICK,  
I LOVE you, there was an ACCIDENT, will you MARRY me,  
GOODNIGHT, GET OFF my lawn, HELLO,  
PICK UP some milk, BAD dog, GOOD job.  
God BLESS you, I'm SORRY.**

**Filled with joy or burdened by sadness  
We know how powerful words can be.  
Words spoken by us, spoken to us, spoken about us.**

**And we ALL know that more often than not, words are just as bad  
As those sticks and stones against our bones.**

**It's no wonder, then, that God chooses to  
Shape and guide our lives through a Word.**

**A Word so amazing and powerful that it was present at  
The very beginning of creation with the world was nothing  
Turned into something God called good.**

**A Word that is so valuable, so critical to our life together,  
That it was sent into the world in the person of Jesus Christ  
To show and tell how good GOD really is.**

**In the later verses of Luke's ninth chapter,  
That word is "follow."**

**We know this word from Jesus,  
It has been issued several times already:  
To the disciples before they were disciples.  
A word at which they dropped everything,  
A word that reframed the entire course of their lives.**

**But here in chapter nine the reaction is quite the opposite.  
"I will follow, but first I need to take care of a few things."**

**And that is not good enough for Jesus.  
To each of the three unnamed persons  
Between Samaria and Jerusalem,  
Nothing should stand in the way of following Jesus.**

**Sure we'll drop the bad and evil stuff to follow Jesus,  
The idolatry, strife, jealousy, dissensions.**

But in Jesus' simple one-word command to follow,  
We are also called to give up the socially proper,  
The agriculturally sound, even the family honor.

Called not just to leave behind the bad,  
But perhaps also, the good.

In his reflections on this episode, Fred Craddock says it like this:  
"The radicality of Jesus' words lies in his claim to priority  
over the best, not the worst, of human relationships.  
Jesus never said to choose him over the devil  
but to choose him over the family.  
And the remarkable thing is that those who have done so  
have been freed from *possession* and *worship* of family  
and have found the distance necessary to love them."

Perhaps the greatest threat to our gospel call to follow Jesus  
Is "the good" and not "the evil."

When we recognize "the evil" in our lives  
We usually want to get rid of it.  
However, when we become content with "the good" –  
The good in our lives, our families, our congregations,  
We may fail to faithfully follow Jesus  
And seek what is "the best."

Words have great power within their letters,  
But they are really just marks on a page  
Or sounds formed in our mouths.

The actions that words compel or inspire,  
The feelings and emotions that they represent,  
That is where their power truly lies.

**Love is just a four-letter word, but the meaning behind it  
Can cause men to melt at the sight of their children being born.**

**Hate is just a four-letter word, but the meaning behind it  
Drives individuals and groups to do awful things to others.**

**Faith, hope, love: all those famous words strung together by the  
Apostle Paul are words on a page  
But the kind of life they represent  
Form the core of our Christian community.**

**What does it look like for you to leave behind the bad and good  
In order to follow Jesus?**

**What is drawing your attention away from the one who leads  
And back towards your old life?**

**What is preventing you from moving forward  
Following in sure and certain hope that the one who leads  
Is leading to the cross, to the tomb?  
Leading to these waters, and to this table,  
Leading to a life marked by discipleship,  
Forgiveness, giving, mercy, and love?**

**None of us, on our own, are going to make the cut to follow Jesus.  
But God has gifted us with a good word,  
A good example in Christ,  
And the strength, guidance, and support of the Spirit.**

**And God has gifted us with each other,  
A community of people living and working side by side  
So that all may come to know how much God loves them.**

**It is challenging and important work.**

**We will fail and disappoint others.**

**We will fail and disappoint ourselves.**

**But DON'T give up.**

**DON'T look back and wonder.**

**DON'T stop following the one who calls us.**

**DON'T ever forget how loved you really are.**

**Amen.**