

SERMON 1: Do You Believe? DO NOTHING

Matthew 7:24-27

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“There’s a war going on out there!” In most every generation this or a similar statement could be heard as one observed what is happening in the world. A strong argument could be made today that a battle rages in society in general, whether it be between philosophies & ideologies, or whether between the church and state, or even between Christians and non-Christians, especially religious antagonists. Paul states in Ephesians: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

So, for the rest of this school year, we will prepare our hearts and lives for this battle. We will seek to **Believe**, understanding what we believe, why we believe it, and how to stand firm in what we believe. We will **Pray**, not just repeating religious sounding words, but learning to pray offensively, preemptively, and defensively so that we can be strong in the Lord. Finally we will once again see the importance of putting our faith into **Action**. The knowledge of Jesus’ sacrifice for us should motivate us to act in Him and for Him.

So, today we begin a closer look at our faith, and what it truly means to believe in the cross of Christ. Again, I want to strongly encourage you to attend tonight’s movie, “Do You Believe?” even if you have seen it before. It will help you examine what you know to be true, and it will challenge you to live out your faith by sharing the life-changing message of the cross of Christ with those who don’t believe.

The act of believing in the NT is found in the word, *pis-two’-oh* – to believe, to put one’s faith in, to trust. To believe goes beyond just knowing and understanding something, it is about doing something, trusting it beyond any doubt and trusting it with your whole heart and life. So, let’s take a look at Scripture, in particular at Matt. 7 and see what faith and a lack of it entail.

Message Points:

- 1) *Recognize* the moment that Jesus is calling.

Matthew 7:24&26—“**But everyone who hears these words**” . . . everyone receives a “call” from Jesus at some point in their life.

Romans 5:8—“**God shows His love – while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**” Jesus has clearly been calling since before we knew He was calling. But the call of God also requires an action, either to believe and act on what we believe, or to hear and do nothing. We must listen.

2) Don't *do nothing* when that happens.

Matthew 7:26—“**And everyone who hears these word of mine and does not do them will be lika a foolish man who built his house on sand.**” God's first “will” for us to act on is receiving Him as Savior! It's foolish not to act . . . Ezekiel 33:32 says it this way, “**they hear what you say, but they will not do it.**” Listening and doing nothing makes Jesus little more than entertainment.

A fencing contractor was talking with a rich property owner about his chances of going to heaven. The rich man believed that God would be pleased with his efforts. He said, “I've lived a good life and been hardworking and giving to worthy causes. Sure, I hide some of my income so it doesn't get taxed as highly . . . but so does everyone else. And in my business you have to do a bit of lying and cheating . . . but how else will I get ahead. All in all I'm OK, I'm a nice person”.

The conversation ended and it was time to build the fence. Two weeks later the fence was ready and the property owner came and had a look. He was shocked by what he saw . . . because there were a number of gaps in the fence. Angrily he asked, “What have you done”. The fencing contractor replied, “Well as I was building I left a few gaps on the way. But don't worry, there are is a lot of fence still left and, in some places I even made it double thickness. The gaps only represent 2% of the fence, that means 98% is just fine”.

The rich property owner replied “98% is OK but you can be sure that the animals will still find the hole in the fence and get out. Near enough is just not good enough and I will have nothing left to show”. At that point the fencing contractor said. “You can see that truth when it comes to your fence . . . how come you can't apply the same thing when it comes to your relationship with God?”

Some are confronted with the question “Do You Believe?” over and over again. Maybe they even sit in church on a regular basis. We are completely separated from God because of our sin. But Jesus takes the punishment for us so that we might have that moment to hear, to believe and move into a relationship with God. The sacrifice of Christ buys us additional time to act on that defining moment. But that time does not last forever.

3) *Do something simple!* Faith requires action, movement, response . . . otherwise it’s just knowledge. In our first lesson today from Romans 10, **“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”** It’s really about acknowledging and trusting what He offers you.

4) *Embrace* what Jesus did for you with your whole life.

Matthew 7:24—**“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”** Acting when you hear God is wisdom!

Romans 12:1-2—**“Be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...be transformed by the renewal of your mind so you may discern what is the will of God...”** When we finally move beyond doing nothing, it should encompass our entire lives.

Application: Faith requires action, movement, response . . . otherwise it’s just knowledge. What action do you need to take this week?

- Embrace Christ for the first time.
- Renew that embrace as you’ve slowly drifted from a life of faith to a life you are living on your own.
- Offer salvation to someone desperately in need. Share Jesus with them. Offer to pray with someone. Invite someone to church during this series.

Today, God is clearly challenging people to put their trust in Him, follow Him with abandon, and act on that belief by giving Him their hearts. Today, maybe He’s inviting you to do that. Maybe you’ve never trusted Jesus. Maybe all this time you have done nothing with the defining moments and opportunities in your life. Do something. Confess that He is Lord. Come to Christ.

A life of faith is not meant to be lived in secret or in silence. That's foolish. A life of faith is meant to DO SOMETHING. This week, seek opportunities to make a difference. And next week, we'll talk about doing something with your belief!