

Just You Tube It!  
James 1:17-21  
September 16, 2018

Theme: Living Faithfully

(Run video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yd-konnnMkE&t=119s>)

So, if you haven't discovered YouTube yet...you just did. Literally, you can learn just about anything on YouTube. I had a shower valve that wasn't working so I bought a new one then discovered the old one didn't want to come out of the valve assembly. I YouTubed it and found out how to make a simple tool; ten minutes later the valve was out. Why did I spend two hours in vain trying to extricate the old valve...Just YouTube it! Imagine, if an 8-year-old can figure out how to drive a car, maybe we need to regulate YouTube videos; he might find the one on driving a tank next.

Did you know we have a YouTube channel right here at Lakeview? If you miss Sunday morning due to some catastrophic situation like the power went out all across the valley and there was no internet available or if you were in some remote area like we were last Sunday in Wiseman, truly "off-grid." Why, we didn't even have cell phone service. Not even a TV in our cabin. Everything ran on solar and battery or propane. No digital anything. So, once we came back to the land of YouTube and animal videos, I was able to watch Pastor Linda's sermon from last week!

The phenomena of YouTube instructional videos is the power of one person figuring something out, then sharing that with, not just his neighbor, but with the whole world. Remember when you first learned to drive? There were actually three pedals on the floor, not two, and you had either three-on-a-tree or a floor shift. I learned to drive in a 1952 Willy's Jeep and it even had a button on the floor to start the motor! Yes, yes, you can learn how to drive a stick-shift with a YouTube video. Cooking videos. From eggs to grasshopper tacos, plumbing to flying, you can find it all.

I searched, "How to live a Christian Life" and found thousands of videos to choose from. Living as a Christian Teen or Nick Vujcic teaching on God's gift of life even though he was born without arms or legs. I bet the first century Christians would have loved to have had YouTube. We come to James and his letter to the twelve tribes disbursed across the middle east, north to modern Turkey, and even further north and east. Times were truly harsh in Israel for a Christian; not only the Jewish leaders, but also the Roman Empire was trying to quash this rebellious group. Indeed, following and worshiping Jesus as God himself, refusing to submit and worship the Emperor! There was a terrific clash of beliefs, oppression, and ridicule if you truly worked to live as a disciple. It was a dangerous time to be a Christian and you could easily be killed

for following Jesus. The temptation to fall into pagan temple worship, false teaching about Jesus, and easy living was strong.

The letter reads a bit like a bunch of YouTube videos strung together with the general heading; “Living a Christian Life.” He begins with an encouraging word; **“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”** (v2) Yeah, right! There is a difference, however, between joy and happiness. We may have an inalienable right to pursue happiness, but Joy comes from the Lord; delight, exultation, or triumph. We are called to “re-joyce” an act of being joyful. Happiness is a state of pleasure, contentedness, satisfaction, merriment. That state of being is transitory; it comes and goes. You can find joy in even the difficulties of life, joy in practicing your faith. Happiness is dependent upon circumstances but joy is not. **“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”** (John 15:11)

Going on, James writes in v17 that “every good gift comes from above” and what good news that is for us today. The world was not a good place in the first century and it’s still a mess. The world may change, but we, who call Jesus Lord and who trust God, have a perfect gift. You are among his first fruits, his chosen and he seeks more like you.

If the world seems like it’s spinning out of control, if you’re tempted to give in to nasty words, revenge, and anger, James offers you a quick YouTube instructional video. Let’s stop and look at our instructions for living faithfully; **“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”** Human anger pushes you away from Christ, away from his unequivocal love. For a refresher, go review 1 Corinthians 13. Don’t just listen to the word, let it take root in you. The next time you’re tempted to scream at someone who disagrees politically with you, stop, listen, be slow to speak and remember who you are.

It is not enough to listen, “do what it says” v22 continues. Faithfulness is a quality, a virtue, if you will. The quality of faithfulness does not magically appear in your life; “I wish I was more faithful, I just can’t seem to do it.” That’s not a statement of futility, but it is a challenge to discover, seek, work toward a life of devotion.

Here’s where I get on my soapbox about the church. No, not a building, not a denomination, though it may be; but it is the people of God – gathered. The Greek word for church is simply, “the gathered.” Yes, you can be a Christian all by yourself and sometimes that happens by necessity when age or physical constraints keep one homebound, for instance. I also know some who live in countries hostile to Christianity and they must, by circumstance, often practice faith apart from others.

But that is not our circumstance. For some who are watching our live stream right now, are a part of this body and perhaps you have nowhere else to turn but have chosen to join us. For those who do not “need” church or who claim to find church in nature only deceive themselves and rob their lives of the richness found only in the gathering together. One might say, “God’s word is enough for me.” Is it really enough when you fail to put the Word to action through encouraging others, serving others, sharing the good news of Jesus, you have not taken God’s word to heart. One is not enough without the other

Yet, church is not the end. We gather to praise, worship, learn, grow, encourage, and be encouraged, to be healed, restored, and sent. We go into the world, engage the world as disciples. “But, pastor,” you say, “I just don’t get anything out of church.” I ask, “What did you bring to add today?” We must not allow our church to become a consumer church; what product are we selling today, have we made everyone happy, does the church look good, was the music perfect, the sermon flawless, the coffee hour have the best goodies today? Don’t be deceived. We are the church, the good news to the world today the same as in James’ day, and so, the church is not just about us or for us. It’s about the people we serve and minister to every day.

Legend has it that a Christian believer who had been lost at sea washed up on the shore of a remote native village. Half-dead from starvation, exposure and sea water, he was discovered unconscious by the people of the village and was slowly nursed back to full health. He lived thereafter among the people for some 20 years.

During his time with them, he lived out his Christian faith. However, he uttered no sacred songs. He preached no pietistic sermons. He neither read nor recited Scripture in public. He made no personal faith claims whatsoever —except by his actions.

When people were sick, he visited them, sitting long hours into the night.

When people were hungry, he gave them of his own food.

When people were lonely, he kept them company.

He taught the children. He always took sides with those who had been wronged. There were few, if any, human conditions with which he didn’t identify.

After 20 years passed, missionaries came from the sea to the village and began talking to the people about a man called "the Christ."

After hearing of this “Jesus,” the natives insisted that he’d been living among them for the past 20 years. “Come,” they demanded, “we’ll introduce you to the man about whom you’ve been speaking!”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> —Sermon by Rev. Eric S. Ritz. Thanks to Rev. Douglas Van Aarsten, Ireton First Reformed Church, Ireton, Iowa as reported in “Homiletics On Line” September 2, 2018.

Legend, perhaps. The question remains; How do you reveal the love of Christ? If a YouTube video were made about you, what would it teach about Jesus? Lakeview is a great place, let us not forget we are the church.