

Sermon Study Notes – Key Points, Questions & Application

Sermon – Jesus' All-or-Nothing Word

Sermon 4 in the Series – “**Words to Live By**” – on Confirmation Sunday

Pastor Martin Lifer, Eastminster Church | May 3, 2026

Key Scripture References

- **James 1:17–18, 21–25** – God gave us birth by the Word of Truth. “Humbly receive the implanted Word... Do not be mere hearers – deceiving yourselves – but be doers of the Word.” The *gospel mirror implied by James 1:23-25* shows us 1) who we are in our natural, sinful state, and 2) who we can become in Christ.
- **John 15:14** – “You are my friends, if you do what I command you.”
- **Luke 8:21** – “My mother and brothers are the ones hearing God’s Word and putting it into practice.” Jesus defines his family by his Word.
- **Luke 6:46–49** – The two builders: “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?” Build on the rock – come to Jesus, hear his words, put them into practice.
- **Isaiah 28:16** – “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a precious cornerstone, and whoever trusts will never be put to shame.” Fulfilled in Jesus.
- **Colossians 1:13–14** – “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
- **1 Peter 1:23** – “You have been born again... by the living and abiding Word of God.”
- **1 John 3:10** – “Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.”

Big Idea

Jesus’ Word is all or nothing. He is *all in* for us – establishing an unconditional covenant sealed by his life and death. In response, He calls us to be *all in*: continually to 1) hear his word; and 2) put it into practice, building our lives on Him and his Word as the only foundation that holds when the storms come.

Occasion: Confirmation Sunday

This sermon was preached on Confirmation Sunday, as students made public professions of faith and were baptized. The invitation is for all of us, not just confirmation students: **Jesus is calling us into covenant with Him – not a passing feeling, but an all-in commitment to hear and live by his Word.**

Review of Takeaways from Last Week’s Sermon

Three takeaways:

1. A disciple gets close to Jesus, does life with others, and joins Jesus’ mission – these are one integrated life, not separate stages.
2. The church is not a place you go for spiritual services. It is the people of God with whom we walk to be with Jesus.
3. Discipleship that never sends is incomplete, because gathering and scattering belong together.

Key Question carried forward: If Jesus’ Word defines reality (series theme), what does it mean to actually build your life on that Word – not just hear it?

Key Answer Opening this Sermon: God’s Word to all who truly receive it brings:
A) Transfers [*& Re-birth*] → B) Transformation → C) Transmission

The Three Transfers: How Salvation Works

Before transformation can happen, understand what God has already done:

1. **Our sin is transferred to Jesus.** He bore it fully on the cross. Without this, we have no hope.
2. **His righteousness is transferred to us.** When God looks at those who belong to Jesus, he sees Christ's righteousness covering us. This is our salvation.
3. **We are transferred to his kingdom.** Colossians 1:13–14: "delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son."

The transfers are gifts from God, and the transformation that follows is a gift, as is the transmission of the gospel to others. We generate none of this from within ourselves.

Faith Alone – But Not Faith That Is Alone

John Calvin: "***Faith alone justifies. But the faith that justifies is never alone.***" It produces and is manifested in works. "***Faith without works is dead and a mere fiction.***"

- **God-given, saving faith always grows godly fruit.** You can look at a person's life and see whether they are in Jesus or not.
- **True Christians live by Christ's Word – in the church and out in the world.** If Jesus is your Lord and friend, you will reflect Him in what you do.
- And the good news: **even our imperfect obedience is covered by grace.** Calvin: "*The good works done by believers are accounted as righteous, though they are imperfect.*" **Everything we do for Jesus is covered by his perfection.**

Jesus Defines His Family by His Word

Luke 8:21 – "My mother and brothers are the ones hearing God's Word and putting it into practice."

- *From his response at age 12 to his mother when she and Joseph lost him, searched three days in Jerusalem, and were astonished to find him the temple ("I must be about my Father's _____" –the implied object could be "house," business, Kingdom mission) through his adult ministry, **Jesus consistently places loyalty to God his Father above earthly family ties.***
- He calls us to pray "Our Father in heaven;" our first family is in God's household.
- The parable of the two sons (Matthew 21): the son who said "yes" but did nothing in the vineyard did not do the Father's will. The son who said "no" but then changed his mind (repented), went and worked in the vineyard did what his father wanted. Jesus is not interested in the right words without the right life.
- **1 John 3:10:** God's children practice righteousness and love their brothers and sisters in the church. These are not optional extras – they are the marks of belonging.

The Gospel Mirror (James 1:23–25) James gives us a two-sided mirror:

- **Side one – the cold shower:** We are sinners. Fallible. We need to see ourselves clearly and rely on Jesus rather than our own ideas or efforts.
- **Side two – the hope:** The gospel mirror also shows us what we can become in Jesus. "The one who looks into the perfect law of liberty and perseveres... will be blessed in his doing."

Hearing, remembering, rehearsing, and doing – these are not separate acts. We gather on Sunday to remember the true story together, so we can live it out during

the week. Like game-film study before the game: if you skip practice, you're not ready for the field.

Build on the Rock (Luke 6:46–49)

“Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?”

Everyone who comes to Jesus, hears his words, and puts them into practice is like a builder who digs deep and lays the foundation on rock. When the storm hits, it holds.

Everyone who hears but does not do what He says is like a builder on sand. When the storm hits, the ruin is *mega* – great.

The storms will come for everyone – death, loss, upheaval, heartbreak. The only question is: what is your foundation? **Isaiah 28:16 says Jesus Himself is the Foundation Stone, the cornerstone, and whoever trusts will never be put to shame.**

Personal Application

The Takeaway This Week:

- **Come to Jesus.** Not just in sentiment – make or renew your covenant with him. He is all in for you. He calls you all in.
- **Hear and do.** This week, take one specific word or command of Jesus and put it into practice – not to earn anything, but because you belong to Him.
- **Look in the gospel mirror.** Ask: where am I hearing but not doing? And: who does Jesus say I can become? Let both sides shape you.
- **Remember the true story together.** Don't let social media or noise replace the gospel. Come back to the Word – in worship, in daily reading, with others – to rehearse what is actually true.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus says, “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” How does that land for you – as pressure, or as an invitation? What is the difference between obedience as earning and obedience as belonging?

2. Calvin says faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone. Where in your life is your faith producing visible fruit? Where in your life is your faith mostly theoretical – believed but not yet lived?

3. The gospel mirror has two sides: it shows us our sin and our need for Jesus, and it shows us who we can become in him. Which side do you spend more time looking at? Which do you most need right now?

4. Jesus asks, “Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?” What is one area of your life where there is a gap between what you call Jesus and how you actually live? What would it look like to close that gap this week?

5. The storms will come for everyone. What is currently functioning as your foundation: on what or whom do you actually build your security, identity, and decisions? How does that hold up against Jesus' claim to be the only cornerstone that will not put you to shame?