



# Hear the Word

from Pastor Drew J. Yoos



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

## Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 30, 2018

### Why Are You Here?

Mark 9:38-50

Have you ever had a new experience where they only tell you the good stuff about it?

Parenting has been one of those experiences for me

- it's gonna be so much fun
- they're so cute
- it's a miracle of life

But they leave out a lot of it, right?

- OK maybe you know about the loss of sleep part
- but what about that couple hours on Saturday that used to be for watching football that are now no longer yours? No one tells you about those couple hours
- what about the privacy? No one tells you that you now have an audience for like half of your bowel movements
- And at some point you just realize, I mean I love her, but there times when I would rather be doing something else

So here's my question for today- Why are you here?

Aren't there other things YOU would rather be doing?

Seriously... you know the Seahawks are playing later, right?

You know there are some darn tasty brunches going on right now...

You know that you aren't caught up on work or homework or housework

You know that if I asked you to take out your calendar right now, it would reveal just how busy and overscheduled your lives are and how much sleep you all need

- and it's costing you precious time and sleep and energy and commitment to be here today

So why are you HERE?

Did you really just have to come today because you couldn't wait to hear Jesus telling us all to cut off our limbs and pluck out our eyes?

'Cause let's face it, the words from Jesus today aren't exactly a pep talk. If you cause someone else to stumble, it's better for you to have a stone hung around your neck and have you hurled into the sea. And if your own hand, eye, or foot causes you to stumble you have two choices: Amputation or fire.

And it's really one of those passages that make you pause and wonder: are there still Christians out there who say they take every word from scripture literally?

Because if you did.... I'm positive we'd all be down a few hands by now.

Because don't tell me your hands have never caused you to stumble. Don't tell me you haven't struck someone or something in a way you regret. Or that you haven't made at least one rude gesture with your hands. Don't tell me your hands haven't clicked over to websites that make you feel some shame. Or that they haven't ever pointed the finger at someone in judgment or derision. If any one of us took this lesson from Jesus literally we'd have to find a new way to pass the peace...

And what about our eyes? I know there are eyes in this room that have looked disapprovingly at someone else in a way that belittles. You know the look.

There are eyes that have scrolled right past news headlines about war and starvation and landed on a headline about which celebrity is on the market.

There are eyes that have chosen to avert away from a person in need on the street.

Yet here we are still able to see.

One of my colleagues said this week that if you read this passage at home and start sawing off your hand you're kind of missing the point. But if you hear this passage read in church and don't start cutting off your hand, you're also missing the point.

Jesus' challenge here actually makes me reflect more on being a parent.

- I have become an expert at making a bottle with one hand.
- I've learned to open car doors with some combination of pinky fingers, shoes, and elbows because so often my hands are full of baby and diaper bag and her shoe that just fell off.
- at times it's like my hands have been cut off.
- being a parent can even feel like having my feet chopped off- I spend a lot more time on my hands and knees than I ever did before or just sprawled out on the floor.
- and my eyes aren't even mine anymore. Because if I take them off of her for a split second, she's in the dog bowl again. Sometimes they might as well be plucked out.
- all those things that at one time I swore I could not live without- my hands, my feet, my eyes, sleeping in, watching football, privacy- I realize those may have just been stumbling blocks.
- and that what actually gives me life is giving life to another, even if it costs me something dear.

So maybe a question that Jesus has for us is- what do you think you can't live without?

One thing I've heard over and over again from youth and parents and just about everyone here is just how busy everyone's lives are. You all have plenty of places you can be and plenty of people you can be with. You have full schedules, full lives, full hands, and full eyes.

- But if you look at that weekly schedule again. What are the stumbling blocks? What is on there this week that might need to be cut out to give you life?

- not just talking about the chores, I'm talking about the things you like and even enjoy.

If your work meeting causes you to stumble, cut it out for better for you to enter life without it than let it suck the life right out of you

We could do the same thing with people- What relationships that you don't think you can do without actually cause you to stumble?

If your Saturday dinner with your in-laws causes you to stumble, cut it out- better for you to enter life without it than leave you feeling weary.

- not necessarily about cutting out the things we don't like, that's easy.

Maybe our story shouldn't be that we are just too busy, but that we just don't have the capacity to cut out the stumbling blocks

This probably isn't what you wanted to hear today. And maybe right now many of you are still wishing you were somewhere else and I'm not sure I blame you. But if you are still here, let's go back to that original question-

Why are you here?

My Friend starting a church in Green Lake area recently had 2 people join him that he wasn't sure fit in. They are older and most of the other crowd is younger. They think differently about the church. Tend to be more formal.

Finally one day he asked them- Why are you here?

They told him honestly- we're just looking for a place to die.

Maybe that's why we're here too. When we could be so many other places brunching and sleeping and with friends.

And sure, those things are valuable, like hands. You can get briefly filled by watching a game or eating with a friend. But you're here, because this is the only place where we all come to die.

- die to our busy schedules because they do not have power over us.
- die to relationships that are not life giving.
- die to habits that hurt ourselves and others.

When we talk about being a Christian, maybe sometimes we only get to the good stuff. The potlucks. The music. The relationships.

No one tells you that following Jesus might just cause you to lose a proverbial hand. Or that you might be seriously asked to cut off things that you're not are you can live without.

Or that you just might even be hurled into the sea.

But the truth is we have already been thrown into the waters against our will.

We have already been drowned in the waters of baptism.

And we are here because we need to be reminded every day that drowning is the only way to life. Because even if we lose our hands, even if we lose our feet, even if we lose our eyes, even if we sink to the bottom of the waters, we will be raised out of it.

Here, in this place, Jesus reminds us that we can cut off some important things out and still be loved.

This path we've chosen, following Jesus, It's not always fun or easy or painless, but it will bring you to life, it's why we're here.