

Daily View

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" Hebrews 3:13

June 24, 2020



Huge waves, Waimea Bay, North Shore, Oahu

“What am I asking...?”

I was preaching one Sunday morning at the Manteca church and an older man was visiting that day, a friend that Christie lived next door to when she was a little girl. He was an elder at Sunnyvale at the time and a well-respected Bible student (and, therefore, I was a bit intimidated).

About mid-way through the sermon, I said “Noah” when I meant to say “Moses” — or something like that. Christie looked at me and began subtly shaking her head. She was trying to get me to rethink what I just said and correct it. But I wasn’t picking up what she was laying down; all I knew was that something was amiss. She continued to look at me trying to get me to catch my error, but I wasn’t getting it at all. Finally, I said, with my hands outstretched, “Christie... *what???*”

At that point Christie’s eyes got really big — with a “what did you just do?” look. Now she’s shaking her head for an entirely different reason. Her look changed from shock to a distinct frown. The last thing she wanted or expected me to do was to ask her, in the middle of worship, what she was trying to tell me. She told me later that she just wanted to slip under the pew, out of sight.

That episode taught us both a lesson. I learned to be more self-aware when I’m speaking and Christie learned to never shake her head when I make a mistake while preaching. I suspect she’s had to hold her head in place many times over the years.

I also thought about what was I expecting Christie to do. Was she supposed to speak up and tell me what I did wrong, right in the middle of a worship service? She would never do that and I knew that. My words came out without taking a moment to think about what I was saying.

There are lots of contemporary sayings about putting your mind in gear before engaging your mouth, but the Bible has something to say about that, too. “Be quick to hear, slow to speak...” (James 1:19). Proverbs 17:28 says, “Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.” Proverbs 29:20 says, “Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” I should have thought about what I was asking Christie to do before I opened my mouth.

It’s good practice whenever we ask a question to consider what we want the person to do. Whenever I pray, I try always to ask, “what am I asking God to do?” That makes praying more difficult but it also makes it more thoughtful. Jesus warns, “when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.” It’s easy to fall into the same old routine, mouthing the same words, almost without thinking.” I’m not sure those prayers get through to God.

Just as I should have thought about what I was asking Christie to do when I said, “what??” we should think about what we are asking God to do before we pray.