**Sermon 10/13/19**

**James 1:22-25, 2:12-26**

June 17, 1998 was a beautiful day. 81-year old Robert Kupferschmid,

          and his 52-year-old pilot friend, Wesley Sickle,

          were enjoying a trip from Indianapolis to Muncie, Indiana,

         in Wesley's small airplane.

During the flight, without any warning, the pilot suddenly slumped over

        and died at the controls.

The Cessna single-engine plane began to dive nose first towards the ground.

Kupferschmid grabbed the controls but had little idea what to do with them.

He got on the radio and pleaded for help.

Nearby was a pilot who heard the call and changed his flight

          to move closer to the Cessna until he could see the plane in trouble.

Mount Comfort was the closest airport, and the pilot gave

          Kupferschmid a steady stream of instructions for climbing, steering,

          and the scariest part: landing.

Robert struggled to remain calm enough to listen and follow his instructions.

The experienced pilot circled the runway three times before

         the frantic, and totally inexperienced, pilot was ready to attempt the landing.

Emergency vehicles were called out and ready for what appeared to be

        an approaching disaster.

The plane's nose nudged the center line and bounced a few times

        before the tail hit the ground.

The Cessna ended up in a patch of soggy grass next to the runway.

Amazingly, Kupferschmid was not injured.

He didn't have a clue how to fly an airplane.

He could only listen and follow the instructions from a complete stranger,

           as if his life depended on it – and it did.

Robert Kupferschmid lived because he had faith in that pilot.

He trusted him, and followed directions,

            even when he did not know what he was doing.

If he had simply listened to his words, but not put them into action,

          he would have died.

We believe in God.         We have faith in God.

But when we neglect to put our faith into action,

           if we don't follow his guidance and directions,

          we can easily miss out on all God wants to accomplish through us.

We miss out on the joy God wants us to experience.

We pray: "Thy will be done."

But in order to do his will, we need to trust him enough to follow his directions,

            even when we are not sure where we are going, or how to get there.

It was a cold and windy late December night.

Snoopy stood in the dark and cold shivering as the snow came down.

He looked mournfully at his empty food dish

            which Charlie Brown had not yet filled.

When the front door opened, Snoopy looked over hopefully.

Lucy stepped out into the cold and called out to Snoopy:

           “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed.”

Then she went back inside the warm house and shut the door.

Cold and hungry, Snoopy sat down in the snow with a bewildered look on his face.

Empty words, with no actions,

           did not help Snoopy feel warm, peaceful, or well fed.

If Lucy really meant what she said, she needed to put her words into action.

We talk about following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Jesus was a man of faith, but he was also a man of action.

Every day was filled with faith and deeds.

Jesus trusted his Father, he trusted him so much he was constantly

             putting his words into action.

In his gospel, John wrote about the life and actions of Jesus.

He ended his gospel with these words:

          "Jesus did many other things as well.

           If every one of them were written down,

           I suppose that even the whole world would not have room

           for the books that would be written."

Doing is always a part of faith.

We are called to be believers. And we are called to be doers.

Our Faith is what saves.

Our actions are what helps others to encounter God.

The Bible is filled with stories of people who had faith in God,

          and put their faith into action, even when they were not sure

           where God was leading them.

Throughout the Bible we discover stories of people who trusted God,

              and went wherever he led them, and did what he asked them to do.

We read the stories about Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Elijah,

            Esther, Ruth, Isaiah, Jonah, Daniel and David.

We know the stories about Mary and Joseph, John the Baptist,

           Peter and all the apostles, Paul,

           and those who helped establish new churches.

Because of their faith, they were willing and able to share God's story of love.

They went out and spread the story throughout the world.

Because of their faith and actions, we have also heard and believed.

We, also are called to believe, and to do.

A chaplain visited a wounded soldier who had been wounded.

The chaplain asked, "Would you like me to read to you from the Bible?"

"No!" came the angry reply.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" he asked.

"I'm thirsty!" the soldier said.

The chaplain gave him a drink from his own canteen.

"Anything else?" he asked.

"I'm cold!" came the reply.

The chaplain took off his coat and spread it over the soldier.

"Anything else?" he again asked. "My head is uncomfortable!" was his reply.

The chaplain took off his cap and arranged it under the soldier's head.

The chaplain asked again, "Anything else?"

The soldier looked up at him and tears came to his eyes as he said,

“I think now I'd like for you to read to me from the Bible.”

Our actions usually speak louder than our words.

We reveal what we believe, not so much by what we say, but by what we do.

The Christian life is based on more than just attendance and words.

It is based on action, belief, and trust.

It is about experiencing the presence of God,

            of having a relationship with our Heavenly Father,

and sharing the joy and peace of God.

Charlie Brown stood at home plate.

The ball was pitched, the umpire called out loud and clear: STRIKE THREE.

Charlie Brown had struck out again.

Dragging the bat along the ground, he crept over to the bench, as he mumbled:

           "Rats! I’ll never be a big-league player.

            I just don’t have it!

            All my life I’ve dreamed of playing in the big leagues,

            but I know I’ll never make it."

Lucy turned and admonished him;

            "Charlie Brown, you’re thinking too far ahead.

             What you need to do is set yourself more immediate goals."

Puzzled, Charlie Brown looked at Lucy and asked: "Immediate goals?"

"Yes." Lucy answered. "Start with this next inning when you go out to pitch.

See if you can walk out on the mound without falling down!"

Like Charlie Brown, we seldom see the big picture of God's plans.

When we trust him we are able to take the next small step,

            even when we are not sure where we are going,

            or what God expects us to do.

We may never be a big-league player.

But God does have a job he wants us to do.

God has a plan and he invites us to be part of it.

We can follow in the footsteps of Jesus one tiny step at a time.

As we reveal our faith by our actions.

AMEN