

Today is Mother's Day. For years my wife used to yell at me and say: "why don't you preach a Mother's Day sermon?" My response was and still is, that Mother's Day is not on the Liturgical Calendar. That doesn't mean that I can't preach on it – but if we think about, we should honor our Mothers and the Mothers of our children and now, our grandchildren every day.

So, to all the Mothers, Grandmothers, those who have mothers, those who have mothers who are no longer with us, and those who hope to someday be mothers – I think I got everyone – Happy Mother's Day! May the Lord richly bless you all. You are all special people in the Lord's eyes and ours!!

Thursday was the 59th Annual National Day Prayer, a law signed into existence by President Harry Truman. It was amended by President Ronald Regan, who designated the first Thursday in May as a National Day of Prayer. The event went on in spite of a number of controversies. First, a Federal Judge in Wisconsin ruled the National Day of Prayer unconstitutional, which thankfully the current administration is appealing.

Then the son of the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham, the Rev. Franklin Graham, the honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer had his invitation to pray at the Pentagon observance revoked because of his comments about the Muslim faith – comments which we hold to be true – that Islam is an evil religion, especially in the way it treats women, among other things.

The Rev. Franklin Graham, who has a son who is fighting for our freedom in Afghanistan still showed up at the Pentagon and prayed outside for our Nation and our troops wherever they might be. Thankfully, he wasn't going to let political correctness keep him from praying. In fact he then said that the President was giving Muslims a pass. As Gomer Pyle would say: "surprise, surprise, surprise!"

It is ironic that inside the Pentagon were Muslim religious leaders – even though the Koran clearly calls for the death of the infidel – which is anyone who doesn't believe in Islam. Now, which religion is truly evil. It is the only religion that has been spread by the sword!

While all this going on, Christians who have been in Morocco for years working as doctors, or working with orphans, teaching and doing other types of humanitarian work are being deported with only hours of notice on the charge of proselytizing. Morocco, which used to be tolerant of the Christians, is giving in the more militant forms of Islam, and some are saying the government is doing this in order to pacify them – to keep them from being more militant. Again, which religion is evil?

And then a few months ago, hundreds of Christians were massacred in Nigeria – by Muslims – simply because they were Christians. The persecution of Christians is happening all over the world – and sadly, although not to the extreme as in some countries – it is happening here in the United States – a country that is supposed to have religious freedom and freedom of speech! Apparently, this doesn't apply to Franklin Graham.

Now, let's go back a week to the Gov. Mike Huckabee show – which I know that some of you saw. The Governor had Franklin Graham on, along with an author – who didn't know if she was an agnostic or an atheist – but wrote a book in which the Governor, a committed Christian, wrote the introduction.

I thought it was a great show, but one of the things that they both emphasized – is that Christians need to be living their lives, in accord with God's Word – IN THE WORLD! Franklin Graham said that Christians should

be the salt and light in the world – echoing the words of our Savior – whom he also said is the only way of salvation.

If we look at our Epistle lesson this morning from James 1:22 we read something simple, but profound: “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*” (REPEAT)

I would connect this with a portion of our Gospel lesson from John 16:33 where Jesus said: “*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*”

He was getting ready to leave them, as this was the last night of his earthly life – and he tells them two things – one, tribulation is guaranteed, but two, most importantly, he has overcome the world.

As Christians we have God’s Word to guide and lead us. 1 Peter tells us that God’s Word has given us all that we need for life and godliness – and as I have explained before God has given us all that is necessary to live our lives on this earth and how to get to the world to come – and that is only through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We want to know how to lead and conduct ourselves as Christians in this world that God has placed in – read and follow God’s Word.

And so we see what God’s Word again says: “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*”

We know what God has revealed in His Word. We know what is acceptable to Him and what is not acceptable to Him. It really is not rocket science. It is also not multiple choice – we cannot pick and choose what we want to follow. It is not like a Chinese restaurant where we pick one from Column A and one from Column B. We have to follow all of it.

So here we see a couple of things. First, we know that we cannot keep God’s law perfectly and completely. If we could, there would be no reason for Jesus to have come. The Bible tells us that if we have broken one law, we have broken them all – that’s just the way it is. And so, because we cannot keep God’s law we are sinners, and that is why Jesus came – to save sinners – to save those who have put their faith in him as Savior, believing that he died for our sins, in our place.

The fact that we are sinners should not prevent us from trying to obey God’s Word the best that we can. Because as we do this we will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

We all know what salt does – it preserves and it flavors. I would hate to think of world without Christianity – and with Christians living their lives in the world – being doers of the word. And as the light of the world we reveal God’s truth to an unbelieving world – we give light to the truth of the Scriptures. Think about those countries where there is no Christian influence or very little and you know clearly what I mean.

Our country was founded by some strong Christians. Whether we were a “Christian” nation is a debatable point – but the Christian influence in our laws and society cannot be denied – nor can the lives of those who were Christians and influenced those laws.

The problem that has arisen in the last number of years that Christians have ceased being the salt and light in of the world. There was one branch of theology, very popular in the 20th century – and since proved wrong – that specifically withdrew themselves from the world, because their theology taught that the world needs to get worse so that Christ can return – so why do anything to improve it. Their philosophy was that you don't polish brass on a sinking ship.

This is really contrary to the scriptures – *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* Are we are to be the salt and light in the world, even though we know that we are just passing through.

But, as we do this in the 21st century we can be guaranteed that tribulation will come. In some countries I could be arrested for what I said about Islam – they define it as “hate speech”. And it is getting close to that in our country. If I tell someone living in sin that he needs to repent and ask God's forgiveness I could be arrested, fined and possibly thrown in jail.

Again, however, as doers of the word – being salt and light in the world around us – we are guaranteed tribulation. It does vary in degree. In this country, people just might make fun of you, or they might revoke your invitation to pray at the Pentagon. Or, they could deport, as they are doing in Morocco, or arrest you as they do in China. Or even kill you – in some Muslim countries – there we go again – you can be executed for tell someone about Christ as the only way of salvation – and if you convert from Islam, you can be executed.

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

So, we see two things – the first is that we are to be Doers of the Word – God has revealed Himself to us through the Lord Jesus Christ and while we are not saved by our works, our works are an evidence of our faith. As we read in Ephesians 2:8-10: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

We see that while not saved by works, that is why we have been saved – to do good works – “Doers of the word.” Or as the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:1: *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,”*

Again, many different terms in the Word of God – Doers of the Word ... walking worthy ... being the salt and light. In short, living our lives as strangers and pilgrims in the world around us, as witnesses to the grace of God in our lives.

And as we do so – we can expect tribulation or persecution. Maybe not the extent as in some countries – but it could be coming. However, we still have the responsibility and privilege of being “doers of the word” to a world that desperately needs to know Christ in personal and saving way.