

# **“When Necessary Use Words”? *Verbum Dei* Theology for Right Now**

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## **SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR COACHES AND FACILITATORS**

- Presenters are encouraged to amend and elaborate the content of each paragraph below, according to personal style, ability and time constraints. The full version below is intended for an hour-and-a-half session or, if time for ample discussion is desired, a two-hour session. Adjust as needed.
- For the original presentation of this workshop, a PowerPoint slide accompanied each paragraph below. A description of the original accompanying text or image follows each paragraph, below. Presenters are encouraged to adapt any available slide template by adding or replacing words or images that might be more suitable to new audiences and contexts.
- This presentation has three main sections: (1) “St. Francis—Setting the Record Straight,” (2) “The Present Context for Preaching,” and (3) “Preaching with Words and Preaching with Deeds—A Lutheran Perspective.” The intention of this workshop is that each of these sections be represented in some way. In addition, presenters are requested to emphasize the theses and discussion outlined in the final section.
- The creator of this presentation has no illusion that there will be uniform agreement regarding the four theses presented in the final section. However, participants can be assured that the theses represent the opinion of the creator!

**Original Overall Description of this Webinar/Workshop.** “By now, you’ve likely been admonished by some t-shirt, poster, or bumper sticker to ‘preach the gospel at all times and, if necessary, use words.’ The slogan (inaccurately attributed to St. Francis) appears to turn the Theology of the Word on its ear. On the other hand, the slogan resonates in a culture where explicitly religious speech is met with suspicion or even outright hostility. Still, if ‘faith comes through hearing’ and ‘God’s Word does what it says,’ then should we not also be speaking up for the spoken, preached Word? Along with Scripture, we look at past and present resources from Lutheran and other tradition to guide our investigation.”

## PART ONE: St. Francis — Setting the Record Straight

1. About 800 years ago, a guy named Francesco de Bernardone started a religious order called “the Little Brothers” (*Friars Minor*). Within two years of his death (1226), the founder was declared a saint (1228). Popular in his own lifetime, St. Francis remains one of the best known and most appreciated saints, not only among Roman Catholics but among Christians in general. Today, you can visit his crypt in the city of Assisi, Italy. [Slide: St. Francis Basilica’s crypt.]
2. Another fun fact: in 1776, a Franciscan missionary from Spain set-up headquarters on the tip of a peninsula of land on the west coast of the “New World.” He named his religious outpost Mission San Francisco De Asis—San Francisco for short. [Slide: Mission Dolores.]
3. The spirit of the original San Francisco—that is, Saint Francis—remains in the cultural consciousness, sometimes subtly... [Slide: Homer as Francis from the “Homer the Heretic” episode of *The Simpsons* (# 62; season 4, episode 3).]
4. Sometimes not. [Slide: Tattoo.]
5. Recently, St. Francis has appeared as the signatory of a slogan that can be found on t-shirts, hoodies, mugs, keychains, and other types of pious swag. [Slide: examples of swag with “Preach always; use words when necessary” on it.]
6. **Participant’s Activity:** Invite participants to share with each other their responses to these questions: “Where have you encountered the slogan?” and/or “What does the slogan say to you?” [Slide: text with these questions.]
7. *It’s worth taking the slogan seriously* if only because it has become somewhat popular in certain youth ministry circles. For instance, the staff of at least one Lutheran camp bore the slogan on their official camp gear (St. Olaf student’s Flathead Lutheran Camp [testimony](#)). And, more recently, there was the tweet you see here. But along with its prevalence, there are other reasons for taking the slogan seriously. [Slide: [November 2012 tweet on ELCAYoungAdults](#).]
8. But before doing so, we should set the record straight. The saying does not originate with St. Francis. That is, there’s nothing from Francis’s own writings or from his earliest biographers that has him saying “preach the gospel always; use words if necessary” or anything similar. Franciscan scholars have looked for an original source but have turned up nothing from Francis’s time (the 13<sup>th</sup> century). It appears that someone at some point in the last century thought the saying sounded like something Francis might have said or would have said and so attached Francis’s name to it. And it went viral. (By the way, the same thing happened with the “Prayer of St. Francis” — [which first appeared in 1912](#). [Slide: A monk with thought-balloon saying, “This will probably get more play if I say that it’s from St. Francis.”])

9. So what did the real St. Francis really say? What was his take on the relationship of preached word and preached deeds? In an early version of the “Rule” that Francis wrote for his religious order, Francis required that his wandering monks should not preach publicly unless they had permission from the local authority to do so. However, whether permission to preach was granted or not, Francis admonished all brothers to “preach by their deeds.” But even this admonishment disappeared from the 1223 version of the Rule, the official, papally-authorized version used by Franciscans to this day. [Slide: the words from the 1221 Rule.]
10. Nevertheless, if you know anything about the origins of the Franciscan order, it’s that Francis understood that most clergy in his time lived lives that did not reflect the life of Jesus. That’s why Francis started his order: to reform the spiritual class so that it looked more, well, spiritual. The original Franciscans tried very much to live lives after Jesus’ example: owning nothing, accepting no money, relying upon the hospitality of others, wandering from town to town, being celibate, and preaching and doing good along the way. So certainly, Francis appreciated the relationship of what you preached and how you lived. But the quote: “Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary” implies that Francis understood that words were of secondary importance to how you live. And that’s simply not what Francis believed. [Slide: Francis saying the saying, but with a question mark.]
11. “What do you think, brothers? What is better? That I should spend my time in prayer or that I should go around preaching? I am a poor, little man, unskilled at speech; with a greater gift for prayer than for speaking. ...In prayer, we address God, listen to him and dwell among the angels. In preaching, we must think, see, say and hear human things, adapting ourselves to them as if we were living merely on a human level, for humans among humans. But there one thing to the contrary that outweighs these considerations: the only begotten son of God, came down from the bosom of the Father for the sake of souls...to speak the word of salvation....And because we should do everything according to the pattern shown to us in him...it seems more pleasing to God that I interrupt my quiet and go out to labor.” And for Francis, such labor included preaching. [Quote adapted from Bonaventure’s *Life of St. Francis* (originally written in 1260; here, the 1978 English translation from Paulus Press). [Slide: the first part of the Francis quote above.]
12. **Participant’s Activity:** Invite participants to share with each other their responses to this question: “Does it make a difference to you knowing that the ‘use words when necessary’ quotation is not originally from St. Francis? Why or why not?” [Slide: text with these questions.]

## PART TWO: The Present Context for Preaching (whether with Words or Deeds)

13. Now that we've set the record straight on St. Francis and the origins of the quotation, it's time to consider the quotation itself and to take it seriously. What does the popularity of the quote imply about the present cultural milieu. Why does "Preach the Gospel always; when necessary use words" resonate in the present context? [Slide: another example of swag.]
14. So here's the present context. Christianity in the USA is in decline. After years of thinking that the US was exceptional and in some way exempt from the diminishment of Christianity that's hit Europe and even Canada, America is finally also experiencing a sudden increase in "secularism." [Slide: Cover of the latest issue (January 2013) issue of *The Lutheran*.]
15. NOTE: By secularization, I mean both its positive sense—being concerned only with earthly, temporal matters—and its negative sense: being wholly UNconcerned with — and critical of — religion and church. (Although for many seculars, the negative sense is also a positive.) [Slide: text of "secularism" definition from m-w.com .]
16. With every new study, the numbers compound. The 2008 American Religious Identification Survey put the number of "non-religious" in the U.S. at 15%. At the end of 2012, a Pew study put the number at 20%. At that rate (an additional 5% every four years), the U.S. will be half "non-religious: by the year by 2032. The scenario is entirely feasible when you realize that the percentage of non-religious folks is highest among adults under 30 years of age. Unless, the so-called Millennial generation "gets religion," the retreat of Christendom will not only continue, it will gather steam. [Slide: graph from Pew study.]
17. Those looking at the numbers have been quick to point out that not all of those who identify as "non-religious" are Atheists. One recent study broke down the "Nones" like this: "Atheist/Agnostic" at 36 percent; "Secular/Non-religious" at 39 percent, and "Unattached Believers" at 23 percent ([The 2012 American Values Survey](#)). So, yes, not all of the "Nones" are non-theists or folks who've turned from God or religion and church. But most are. [Slide: "I can be good without God" [billboard](#).]
18. **Participant's Activity:** Invite participants to share with each other their responses to these questions: "What do you know about the 'Rise of the Nones'?" and "What do you think are the reasons behind the 'Rise of the Nones'?" [Slide: text with these questions.]
19. The Pew Researchers offered [four possible reasons](#) for the "Rise of the Nones," especially among younger adults. First, is the notion that it's a backlash against the political involvement of the religious right. Second, is the idea that because people are getting married and starting families later in life, there are more and more young singles doing what young singles have always done: stay away from church. Third is the theory that, for many reasons, including the advent of social media, there is less need to come together in one place for community. And last is a premise that's been around since the 1960s, namely, that the more health, wealth, security, and knowledge, the less need for religion. The Pew

folks cite other studies which have shown that “religious beliefs and practices tend to be less strong in places where ‘existential security’ is greater.” [Slide: Man in white coat with clipboard, citing each item in a speech balloon.]

20. Commentators who count themselves among the Nones have also weighed in on why the Nones are on the rise. Phil Zuckerman, a professor at Pitzer College, [says](#) that “The rise of the ‘nonreligious’ is partly a result of the decline of liberal Christianity. His research echoes one of the four reasons given by the Pew researchers: “People who might have considered themselves mainline believers a generation or so ago don’t want to be associated with a belief system that they think has been hijacked by the religious right. The religious liberals have become *nonreligious liberals*.” (It’s worth noting that under Zuckerman’s leadership, Pitzer became the first college in the country to offer a major in Secular Studies.) [Image: Pitzer’s Secular Studies web-page.]
21. Another secularist, the “Friendly Atheist,” Hemant Mehta, also thinks the political backlash theory makes the most sense. But he also wonders if the Internet itself isn’t a big part of the picture. “[The Internet is] a religion destroyer as much as anything else we’ve ever seen — open access to information, the ability to prove your pastors wrong, the overwhelming number of atheists who make their case online... how is that not a force to be reckoned with?” ([Source](#).) But until further studies are published, we remain short on data that answers the question *Why* is religion — Christianity especially — in decline the USA? [Slide: screen grab from Mehta’s site.]
22. In the meantime, there are plenty of Christian thinkers who will tell you that it all amounts to an image problem. Fix the way Christians are perceived and you’ll fix the negative demographics. For example, in a little book called *They Like Jesus But Not the Church* (Zondervan, 2007), author Dan Kimble identifies six perceptions that he believes drives people away from church or keeps them from being interested in the first place: (1) the church is an organized religion with a political agenda, (2) the church is judgmental and negative, (3) the church is dominated by males and oppresses females, (4) the church is homophobic, (5) the church arrogantly claims that all other religions are wrong, and (6) the church is full of fundamentalists who take the whole Bible literally. His solution: the “emerging church” shouldn’t be any of these things; that is, Christianity needs a little less intolerant talk and a lot more “walk” that features kindness, openness, vulnerability, etc. Other “emerging evangelicals,” such as Brian McLaren and Phyliss Tickle, express a similar strategy. [Slide: Kimble’s book with surrounding words identifying the 6 points.]
23. The slogan “Preach the Gospel always; use words when necessary” suggests this kind of sensitivity to Christian proclamation that comes off as intolerant. But does the fact that some Christians are overly loud and overly judgmental mean that a verbal witness of the faith should be de-emphasized, in favor of a silent, works-based witness? We’re familiar with the idea of “Walk the Talk.” What resources do Lutherans have at hand, when the “emerging” Christian culture suggests that “the Talk” is not really that important or perhaps even a part of the problem? [Slide: [poster](#): hypocrite defined: if you don’t walk the walk...]

**PART THREE: Preaching with Words and Preaching with Deeds: A Lutheran Perspective**

24. “Faith comes through hearing,” the Apostle famously declared in Romans 10:17. And people who resonate with “Always preach the gospel; use words when necessary” likely understand that, indeed, sometimes it is indeed *necessary* to use words, if the idea is that faith comes via hearing. But with so many different things being preached, it seems that there is an understanding that, these days, a lot of what gets proclaimed in Christ’s name does not inspire faith but prevents it. [Slide: Billy Sunday lettin’ ‘em have it.]
25. The Lutheran movement has, from the beginning, emphasized the power and necessity of the proclaimed word. “God’s Word is our great heritage” is the claim of one of the hymns in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Similarly, “A Mighty Fortress is our God” proclaims that “God’s Word forever shall abide, and that when it comes combating the evil one, it’s not so much good deeds but “one little word” that subdues him. Like it or not, the Lutheran legacy to Christianity has been, historically, to place great emphasis on God’s gracious Word that justifies through faith in Jesus Christ. [Slide: Image of “God’s Word is our Great Heritage.”]
26. By way of offering a helpful Lutheran response to “Always preach the Gospel; use words when necessary,” this concluding section will begin with a brief little quiz (for the purpose of gauging the collective wisdom of those in the room). [The quiz will rely on participants’ knowledge of two historical documents which help define the Lutheran movement: the Augsburg Confession (1530) and Luther’s Large and Small Catechisms (both 1529).] [Slide: “Quiz Time!”]
27. **Question 1:** According to the Augsburg Confession (art. V, German text), in order that we might obtain justifying faith, what did God do?
- (a) Institutum est ministerium docendi Evangelii et porrigendi Sacramenta.
  - (b) Gott hat das Predigtamt eingesetzt, das Evangelium und die Sakramente gegeben.
  - (c) God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments (English translation)
  - (d) Du, du, liegst mir in Herzen; du, du, liegst mir in Sinn...

[Slide: text of the multiple choice.]

28. **CORRECT ANSWERS:** b and c. NOTES. “b” = the modern form of the original German text. “c” = the English translation of the German (*Book of Concord*, 2000, p. 40f). “a” represents the original (1530) Latin version, which translated, is interesting in itself. The Latin translates as “The ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted”—yes, preaching (*praedicendi*) was *not* part of the version read by the Catholic

authorities. “d” = the first lines of a popular German love song, which you can hear Marlene Dietrich sing [here](#). [Slide: correct responses highlighted.]

**29. TWO QUESTIONS TO ASK — FOR DISCUSSION:**

- (a) Do we need to rethink what the preaching “office” is? That is, is it necessary that only those who have had seminary training be “ordained” into such an office? How can the ELCA adjust its understanding of diaconal ministers, Associates in Ministry, and other, future modes of called service, so that a broader demographic of church folk are “ordained” to “give the gospel” via preaching, teaching, and the sacraments?
- (b) Can we think of “giving the gospel” as more than Words only, in much the same way that the Sacraments are more than words only?

[Slide: discussion questions.]

**30. Question 2:** According to the Augsburg Confession (Article 6), the faith produced by giving the Gospel is...

- (a) not yet fully formed.
- (b) needs to be proven by doing good works.
- (c) Should yield good fruit or is bound to produce good fruits.
- (d) irrational, foolish.

[Slide: text of the multiple choice.]

**31. CORRECT ANSWERS:** Strictly according to the text of Article VI, “c” is the only proper response. The English translation of the German text says “should yield good fruit”; the Latin text translates as “bound to yield good fruits” (*Book of Concord*, 2000, pp. 40f). “d” is a reference to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 1:18. [Slide: correct responses highlighted.]

**32. A QUESTION TO ASK — FOR DISCUSSION:**

What is the difference between a faith that “should” produce good fruit and a faith that is “bound” to produce good fruit? (Note: Augsburg Confession, Article Six, makes clear that by “good fruit” it specifically wants us to understand “good works.”) [Slide: discussion question.]

**33. Question 3:** According to Luther’s Large Catechism, “the reason we take such care to preach on the catechism frequently” is

- (a) to impress it upon our young people
- (b) so that it may penetrate deeply into their minds

(c) so that it may remain fixed in their memories

(d) Wait. What? We're supposed to preach on the Catechism frequently?

[Slide: text of the multiple choice.]

34. **CORRECT ANSWERS:** a, b, and c are correct, as each line is a quote from Luther's original (1529) preface to the Large Catechism (*Book of Concord*, 2000, p. 386). "d" is a rhetorical question, expecting a YES answer, and so is correct as well. [Slide: correct responses highlighted.]

35. **THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK — FOR DISCUSSION:**

(a) Since the Catechism includes The Ten Commandments and Luther's Explanations (the content of which is *solely* concerned with conduct in regard to God and neighbor!), isn't it high time to proclaim clearly that the Catechism is concerned with more than just what one thinks or says but also what one does?

(b) Can the same be said of the Catechism's other sections (Creed, Lord's Prayer, Sacraments, Table of Duties)—that is, that these also contain implications and direction for conduct? (For instance, Luther's explanation of Baptism includes an admonishment to drown the old self in daily repentance.)

(c) Insofar as our congregations have neglected regular catechetical teaching as part of worship—neglected to make it part of an annual rhythm for all (not just youth)—have we truncated the original Lutheran vision for the preaching office and for teaching the gospel?

[Slide: discussion questions.]

36. **Question 4:** According to Luther's Small Catechism, what are believers redeemed and set free *for*?

(a) To become Franciscans.

(b) To belong to Christ.

(c) To live in Christ's Kingdom.

(d) To serve Christ (in ever-lasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness).

[Slide: text of the multiple choice.]

37. **CORRECT ANSWERS:** b, c, and d are all part of Luther's explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that Jesus Christ ... is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil [i.e., what we have been set free *from*], not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has

done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness..." (*Book of Concord*, 2000, p. 355.) Regarding "a": Luther did not object to monastic orders or to celibacy for that matter. However, he taught that no one should be forced to join or stay in a monastery or convent against their will AND he taught that celibacy should not be a prerequisite for holding the preaching office. [Slide: correct responses highlighted.]

**38. TWO QUESTIONS TO ASK — FOR DISCUSSION:**

- (a) In your experience, has the Lutheran teaching of justification by faith (or any other teaching of justification) emphasized what believers are saved *from* or what believers are saved *for*?
- (b) Whatever your response to Question A, above, what kind of changes would you like to see in our pulpits so that the hearers of Lutheran sermons will be taught about "freedom from" as well as "freedom for"?

[Slide: discussion questions.]

39. As a concluding activity, please join in considering four theses. Yup, not 95. Just four. And as in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, these four theses are not intended as authoritative and authoritarian once-and-for-all statements of divine truth. Instead, they are intended for discussion among sisters and brothers in Christ. So try these theses on for size, ask questions, offer counterpoints and, perhaps most important, weigh them against what is contained in the scriptures and in other defining documents of the Lutheran Church. [Note: Not many people know that after Luther's 95 Theses were published in 1517, he also published a bible-based defense of his 95 theses (*Explanations of the Disputes Concerning the Power of Indulgences*, 1518) in order to clarify what he meant with each of the short statements of the original. In the same manner, explanations of each of the four theses are offered below.] [Slide: Luther Lego.]

40. As a possible additional step, each participant is encouraged to adapt each of the four theses into a sentence that will become her/his own, personal version of a theology of God's Word (Latin = *Verbum Dei*) to suit her/his present context. Put another way, these four theses are offered to equip and challenge participants to come up with an individual Verbum-Dei-for-Right-Now™ Personal Statement. So, as we go through the four thesis, begin to think about how you might morph each concept into a paragraph declaring your own understanding of preaching and teaching the Word in the world today. [Slide: image of writer thinking; words "Verbum Dei = Word of God" and "What Does This Mean?"]

**NOTE:** It may be preferable to have a handout with items 34-37 printed out in their entirety— that is, including each of the four theses, as well as their explanations, in addition to the brief guidance offered for writing one's own Verbum-Dei-for-Right-Now™ Personal Statement.

41. Toward a Verbum Dei Theology for Right Now. Thesis #1 (up for defense and discussion)

**THESIS ONE.** We can learn much from the fake St Francis Quotation. AND we can learn much from the real St. Francis. [Slide: the words of Thesis #1.]

**Explanation.** So, yeah, in section one, we ruined once-and-for-all the romantic notion that “Preach the Gospel always; when necessary use words” originated with the famous thirteenth century monk, Francis of Assisi. But the quotation still needs to be taken seriously because of the way in which it resonates with so many today. This was the point of section one, actually. In addition — and this is important — the original Francis was inspired to begin a movement that emphasized Christ-like living, because he share the opinion of many in his day: the clergy may speak heavenly words, but they live like hell. Some of Christ’s harshest words were directed toward the teachers of the law and Pharisees of his day. Jesus called them hypocrites and compared them with “white-washed tombs which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth” (Matthew 23:27).

**Guidance for Sentence #1** of Personal Verbum-Dei-for-Right-Now™ Personal Statement. Introduce your paragraph with words that include your understanding of the point behind the saying, “Preach the Gospel always; when necessary, use words.”

42. Toward a Verbum Dei Theology for Right Now. Thesis #2 (up for defense and discussion)

**THESIS TWO.** If the Lutheran understanding is that good fruit (good works) are bound to follow the faith that results from preaching, perhaps we can also say that “actions that preach” follow “words that preach.” Further, perhaps there is also a way to understand that words that preach follow actions that preach. [Slide: the words of Thesis #2.]

**Explanation.** The essential Lutheran response to the Roman Catholic position on faith and works is that truly good works follow faith. This thesis agrees with that viewpoint. In addition, this thesis wonders if it’s possible that the good fruit that faith yields might not also have the effect of preaching? That is, are the good fruits of preaching a part of “giving the gospel”? Certainly, announcing Matthew 5:16 to the newly-baptized suggests the possibility that our conduct also preaches: “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” In the same way, the scripture demonstrates that preaching follows “good works” as well as good words. See, for example, the story of the man born blind in John 8.

**Guidance for Sentence #2** of Verbum-Dei-for-Right-Now™ Personal Statement. In this sentence, use your own words to describe your understanding of the relationship between words that inspire faith and works that inspire faith. Use examples from scripture if you can.

43. Toward a Verbum Dei Theology for Right Now. Thesis #3 (up for defense and discussion)

**THESIS THREE.** We have a great resource for how to live lives that “preach”: it’s called the Small Catechism (esp. the Ten Commandments section). [Slide: the words of Thesis #3.]

**Explanation.** Lutheran Christians do not need to reinvent the wheel regarding teaching about godly conduct and love of neighbor. All that we need and more is contained in the Catechism, especially the section comprised of explanations of the Ten Commandments. Whether a congregation’s worship rhythm is dictated by the lectionary or not, all members need to be educated about the kinds of behaviors the Commandments prohibit *as well as* the kinds of behaviors the Commandments require. There’s usually a plan to teach middle schoolers this stuff over time; why not then also for the entire congregation? As Luther advised: “...you need not take up all the parts at once but may instead handle them one at a time. After the people understand the First Commandment well, then take up the Second, and so on. Otherwise they will be so overwhelmed that they will hardly remember a thing” (*Book of Concord*, 2000, p. 349).

**Guidance for Sentence #3** of Verbum-Dei-for-Right-Now™ Personal Statement. Here, write a sentence that expresses the manner in which you would like to see the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Sacraments taught so that they produce faith that is “bound to yield good fruit.” (Unless that’s not what you want, in which case: never mind.)

44. Toward a Verbum Dei Theology for Right Now. Thesis #4 (up for defense and discussion)

**THESIS FOUR.** Not only should we enhance our understanding of the preached Word, we should also enhance our understanding of the preaching office. [Slide: the words of Thesis #4.]

**Explanation.** The “preaching office” refers to the Christian community’s charge to set aside certain members to be in charge of, to oversee, to direct the ministry of “giving the gospel” via preaching, teaching, and the sacraments. Today, the holders of the office (“ordained pastors”) are the ones who do most of the preaching during worship, and that’s as it should be. Sometimes, however, guest preachers (retired clergy no longer in office, seminarians, licensed lay preachers, youth leaders, and other church staff, etc.) are allowed to take the pulpit. There’s nothing in the Bible or in the Lutheran Confessions that says that only people with four years of expensive seminary education can preach and give the sacraments. We should think of other ways (besides four year of seminary) to equip people to be leaders in preaching, teaching and, yes, giving the sacraments (controversial!), so that eventually all ELCA members, youth included, will understand not only that they have a role in “giving the gospel” but they’ll also learn what that role is.

**Guidance for Sentence #4** of Verbum-Dei-for-Right-Now™ Personal Statement. Conclude your paragraph with a sentence that describes your vision for how the “preaching office” might become more efficient and effective?

45. **Concluding remarks**, pt. 1. Thanks for participating in this mediation on the slogan, “Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.” The purpose of this workshop was to help spur your thinking about how to announce the good news of Jesus in a culture that is growing increasingly suspicious of religious-sounding language. And, as identified, part of the suspicion stems from the perception that Christians don’t act very Christ-like. Un-Christ-likeness was likely the observation that inspired this verse from the book of James: “Be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (James 1:22). [Slide: “Be doers of the Word and not merely hearers.”]
46. **Concluding remarks**, pt. 2. Martin Luther went on record with his annoyance for the book of James, because he understood that, with verses like the one just quoted, James preached works-righteousness. But what if the passage is interpreted differently? What if “doers of the word” refers to the art and activity of preaching through word and deed? Whatever the case, for those who would begin to insist that preaching with words is really not necessary at all, it’s a good reminder to know that James 1:22 works even better when flipped on its head: “Be hearers of the word and not merely doers.” [Slide: “Be hearers of the Word and not merely doers.”]