

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025
SERMON: THE JESUS ALGORITHM
SCRIPTURE: JOHN 13:31-35
ACTS 11:1-18
REV. IRENE WILLIS HASSAN**

John 13:31-35

31 When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. **32** If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

33 “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Acts 11:1-18

11 The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. **2** So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him **3** and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

4 Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: **5** “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. **6** I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. **7** Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

8 “I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

9 “The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ **10** This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.

11 “Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. **12** The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. **13** He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. **14** He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.’

15 “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. **16** Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with [b] the Holy Spirit.’ **17** So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

Sermon: The Jesus Algorithm

Does everyone here know what an “algorithm” is?

In math, it’s the step-by-step process you follow to solve a complicated problem. But in our digital age, the meaning has shifted a bit. Today, when we talk about algorithms—especially online—we’re usually talking about something a computer does in the background. It pays attention to your clicks, your searches, and even how long you linger on something. And then it feeds you more of that same kind of content. So, for example, if you “like,” search for, or just hover over a post about the native bird species of French Polynesia, your device will take note. And soon enough, you’ll find yourself an amateur ornithologist with a personalized internet feed filled with rare tropical birds. Whether you asked for it or not, that’s what you’re going to get.

Every major platform does this. Facebook suggests people you might know based on mutual connections. Google remembers what you’ve searched before and tailors results to match. LinkedIn filters content based on your job history and resume. These systems are all driven by algorithms—designed to keep you engaged by giving you more of what you already prefer.

And that might sound harmless—maybe even helpful—but it’s also part of a deeper problem.

For over twenty years now, political scientists and sociologists have warned us: America is becoming more and more divided. One big reason? The internet. More specifically, algorithm-driven content.

Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram track your political leanings. If you tend to engage with liberal ideas, you’ll start seeing more of them. If you lean conservative, the same thing happens. These algorithms build echo chambers. They narrow our vision. They teach us to assume that what we see is all that’s out there. And soon, we’re shocked when a national election doesn’t go the way we thought it would—because our curated feeds had filtered out any voices that disagreed with us.

So why am I talking about algorithms today?

Because they make it harder to obey Jesus.

When our feeds are constantly reinforcing our preferences—when we’re surrounded only by people who think like we do, vote like we do, live like we do—it becomes harder to live out the command of Christ: “Love one another.”

And whether you interpret that command as a call to love all people or just fellow believers, either way, it’s a command that pulls us out of ourselves and into relationship with others. But today’s online world makes that harder.

Take Reddit, for example. It’s a site organized into interest groups, or “subreddits.” There’s one group called “Open Christian”—a space that leans toward a broad, inclusive, all-are-welcome theology. Then there’s another one called “True Christian”—more focused on traditional doctrine, personal holiness, and holding fast to biblical truth. Both groups claim the name of Christ. But they almost never interact. Why? Because the algorithms separate them. Each group gets more and more of what it already wants, until there’s no bridge left between them.

That’s not how love is supposed to work.

There’s another kind of algorithm at work in the world—a different pattern that doesn’t reinforce our preferences, but reshapes our heart; one not based on your preferences, but God’s purpose. I call it the Jesus Algorithm.

The Jesus Algorithm doesn’t ask, “*What do you already like?*” It asks, “*Who needs love?*”

It doesn’t sort people into categories. It pulls them together.
It doesn’t keep you comfortable. It draws you into the discomfort of grace.

Grace is uncomfortable. It means leaving your bubble—social, digital, or ideological—to love the full breadth of God’s creation as He loves it.

The world’s algorithms aim to satisfy you. It tells you what you already know and like and reinforces your opinion about it.

But the Jesus Algorithm aims to transform you – to pull you out of your own thoughts and opinions, to make you less dependent on your own understanding and more dependent on His. The Jesus Algorithm invites you to see not what you feed yourself, but what He intends to feed you.

Ok – so how do you know the difference between the algorithm of your preferences and the algorithm of God’s loving grace? To examine this with integrity, let’s anchor in Scripture the apostles’ example of what it means to “love one another” in a divisive environment.

You see, Peter and the original apostles were all too familiar with the divisiveness we experience even among believers in the body of Christ. In Acts 11, Peter had just come back from the house of Cornelius—a Gentile, an outsider. The Jewish believers were upset. “Why did you go into the house of uncircumcised men and eat with them?” they asked.

And Peter told them about a vision he’d had. A sheet from heaven filled with animals that were considered unclean under the Law. And a voice from heaven said, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

At first, Peter didn’t understand. But when the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius’ household—these Gentiles who had believed in Jesus—he realized what was happening: God was rewriting the boundaries. The old categories no longer applied. The Holy Spirit wasn’t waiting for Peter’s approval. It was already at work.

And Peter said something that should stop all of us in our tracks:
“Who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

That’s what the Jesus Algorithm does.
It overrides our systems. It crosses our lines.
It challenges our assumptions and asks us to love in ways we never expected.
Think about Jesus’ words from the Gospel of John:
“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

Now, some people say, “He was talking to His disciples—so that command is just for Christians to love other Christians.” And maybe that’s technically true. The folks in the “Open Christian” Reddit thread consider themselves Christian, as do the folks in the “true Christian” reddit thread – yet, they don’t regard each other as fellow believers because of the algorithmic preferences they’ve guarded themselves with.

But we have to pay attention to the way Jesus actually *loved*. He didn’t just love His own kind. He loved the ones others rejected. He touched lepers. He welcomed sinners. He praised the faith of a Roman centurion. And He prayed forgiveness over the very people who nailed Him to the cross.

That’s not tribal love. That’s not algorithmic affection for people like us.

That’s the Jesus Algorithm at work—grace that doesn’t stop at borders. It asks people of all walks of life – liberal, conservative, Jew, Gentile, pink hair, cowboy boots, whatever – to be transformed by love and grace and to live into the glorious testimony that Jesus changes lives through this radical love that breaks down our narrow algorithmic preferences.

It’s easy today to get caught in echo chambers. Facebook shows you people you agree with. YouTube leads you further down the rabbit hole. Reddit has communities like

“Open Christian” and “True Christian”—each with very different takes on faith—and the two rarely cross paths. They exist in separate online bubbles. Separate algorithms. But church, we were never meant to live in bubbles.

Jesus didn’t die to create filtered communities.
He died to make one Body out of many.

And when we love one another—not just the ones who look like us or think like us, but *all* of God’s people—that’s when we show the world what His love looks like. That’s why Jesus said: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples—if you love one another.”

Not by your theology degree.
Not by your correct doctrine.
Not even by your righteous living.
But by your love.

So here’s the challenge.
Are we living by the world’s algorithm—or by the Jesus Algorithm?

One centers you. The other centers Christ.
One keeps you comfortable. The other leads you to the cross.
One narrows your circle. The other breaks it wide open.

So ask yourself:
Who’s outside your circle right now?
Who have you unfollowed—online or in your heart?
Who have you silently decided is beyond the reach of grace?
Because here’s the truth: if the Holy Spirit is still falling on unexpected people, then we had better not stand in God’s way.

Church, it’s time to surrender to the Jesus Algorithm.
Let it reorder your heart.
Let it stretch your love.
Let it connect you to the people you’d never choose on your own.
Because the world already knows how to love its own.

But when we love like Jesus—when we cross boundaries, when we show mercy, when we let grace interrupt our preferences—that’s when the world sees something different. That’s when the Church becomes what it was meant to be.

So may we live by the Jesus Algorithm.
And may the world know we belong to Him—by our love.

Amen.