

SERMON October 18, 2020

Aloha and Good Morning Brothers and Sisters...

Let's open with a word of prayer...

Heavenly Father, we thank You for allowing us to be together today to praise You and hear Your word...we love You and firmly establish our faith in You as our creator and loving God...we ask that you give us wisdom and discernment as we seek to be closer to You by the study, understanding, and application of Your word...help us as we strive to live in righteousness...and we humbly pray all of these things in the Holy name of your Son, Jesus...AMEN

Worship: Let's have Gary come forward and lead us in worship, accompanied by Abby & Sue

Announcements: "I have a couple of quick announcements first"

- We will have our Church business meeting this afternoon at 3:00 pm via Zoom...if you would like to attend, there is still time for Nate to send you a link so that you can join the meeting...so please leave your name and email address on the paper provided at the picnic table following today's service.
- Again, we wish to express our sincerest thanks to all of you who continue to support the Church by your gracious donations.
- We ask for your ongoing prayers as we continue to fill the pulpit for Ocean View Evangelical Community Church while they are searching for a full-time pastor.

Let's Recap Brother Nate's sermon:

Last Sunday, Nate spoke to us about the temptation within...James said, Blessed is the person who endures temptation and testing, because he will receive the crown of eternal life that God has promised...It is by our own lust and desires that we are tempted to sin...our lust for earthly and idolatrous things grows as we are drawn away from God's truth and righteousness...and it is in these lustful temptations that we are tested...and when temptation comes to fruition we have sinned...and the result of sin is death...so it is that if we do not withstand temptation and we sin without repenting, we will suffer death eternal...but if we endure our lustful trials and cling to the will and righteousness of God, we will receive eternal life...but we must remember that temptation does not come from God, and we cannot say that "I am being tempted by God"...for every good thing or perfect gift comes from the Father of lights.

Today's sermon is from James 1:19-27 "Hearing and Acting in Faith"

Here's what James says as we start out with verses 19 & 20...

V. 19 My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger,

V. 20 for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

Now, being slow to speak and slow to anger, are qualities of a wise and informed person...someone who gives care and thought to what they are hearing and saying...but as humans, we are all capable of making mistakes...we can misinterpret what is said to us and this can cause hurt feelings...which, in many cases, causes us to react with anger...

But, as you can see here in verses 19 & 20, James is giving us sage advice...he is telling us something that we should all commit to memory and practice regularly...that being "quick to listen" shows our **deliberate** attention to what someone is saying...it allows us the time to gather our patience and understanding before responding...thereby avoiding a rash interpretation or a rush-to-judgement...

Friends, how often is it that we catch someone, or even ourselves for that matter, being too quick to judge and then lashing-out...based on unfounded assumptions, we "jump to conclusions" all too readily...and in doing so, we can hurt others by what we say or how we act towards them...it even happens between family and friends...this is unrighteous behavior...

And like James says, "...human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness"...God expects us, especially Christian believers, to behave righteously...to be understanding and forgiving...to be quick to hear, but slow to speak, so that we avoid unrighteous anger...

The use of our tongue has been likened to a weapon...that like a sharp sword or knife, it cuts quickly and deeply...it can leave a wound in the heart, that in some cases, may never heal...

Hear what Scripture says about our manner of speaking in Proverbs 10:19 & 20...

- In many words, transgression is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is prudent.
- Choice silver is a tongue of righteousness, a heart of wickedness is of little worth.

Folks, we are gifted with two ears who are open to hearing, and one tongue kept enclosed behind our lips with which to speak...it says in Proverbs 10:31...

- The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a tongue of perversity will be cut off.

So what these verses are telling us, is that we must **act and speak** without a wicked heart...we should act and speak out of love for one another...and be forgiving, particularly towards those who are not mindful of the righteousness of God and what He requires of us...

James continues telling us in verse 21, **how** to conduct ourselves in a righteous manner...

V. 21 Therefore, ridding yourselves of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Remember this, God gave us His Holy word and His only begotten Son for our salvation...and like a seed planted within us, **the word of God, proclaimed by Jesus and faithfully acted upon by us, is able to save our souls**...but we must remove all immorality from our lives, we must remove all idolatrous desires...And we must nurture the righteous seed planted within us, by caring for it with loving attention...we must pray and read God's word daily, and then, with humility, live with a righteous heart...

Listen to how this is put to us in 2 Timothy 3:16 & 17...

- All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness,
- in order that the person of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

As we move on to the next verse in James, verse 22...it says,

V. 22 But be doers of the message and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves,

Here, James is telling us not to deceive ourselves...that we are to **not only read and listen** to what the word of God says, but we are to **act as the word of God instructs us**...and then, as Christian believers, we are to follow the path of righteousness...and we are also to be an example to others, as we help them to find and follow the same path...the narrow path that leads us home to heaven...

Listen to what Jesus says about this in Matthew 7 verses 21 & 24, as He was giving His sermon on the mount...

- Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who **does** the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter.
- Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and **does** them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Luke parallels this same depiction of a rock-solid faithful foundation, as described by Jesus, in chapter 6 verses 47 & 48...

- "Everyone who comes to me and listens to my words and does them—I will show you what he is like:
- he is like a man building a house, who dug and went down deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood came, the river burst against that house and was not able to shake it, because it had been built well.

Now, in the next two verses of James, verses 23 & 24, he tells us what kind of person we are if we **don't** follow and practice God's word...

V. 23 Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror.

V. 24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was.

James is using this analogy of a hearer and a doer to depict someone looking into a mirror and seeing their self, but who doesn't act on what they see...For example, if you got up in the morning and went to the bathroom to get ready for the day, and you looked in the mirror but forgot to wash your face, brush your teeth, and fix your hair...you'd probably look pretty bad as you went out the door, and people at work or elsewhere would probably make snide remarks about you behind your back or just avoid you altogether...

In other words, you saw what you looked like in the mirror, but you didn't do anything about it...This is the exact same thing as someone who has been given the word of God to save their soul, and yet, doesn't care to act in the righteous manner being taught to them...they hear what's right but they don't care to act right...

What's more, listen to what Jesus says to us about a hearer and a doer in Luke 6 verse 49...

- But the one who hears my words and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation, which the river burst against, and immediately it collapsed—and the collapse of that house was great!”

So, to be perfectly clear...as Christian believers...we are to be **doers** of the word, not just hearers...then, we will be wise and our faith (our house) will be built on a solid foundation of righteousness...

In the next verse of James, he tells us about someone who **abides** by God's law, a **doer** and not just a hearer...listen to what it says in verse 25...

V. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

The law James is speaking of is the Word of God...the perfect law...the law of liberty...this is the law of God written in Scripture...it is the law of morality and judgement given to us by God and delivered to us by His Son Jesus...and it is the law that we must abide by as Christian believers...and as a reward for doing so, we will be blessed in this age, and in the eternal life to come...

You know My Friends, in the early days of the Church, believers didn't have the **written** word of God...they only had what was spoken to them by Jesus and His disciples...today, we are so blessed to have the **written** word of God in the Bible...something tangible that we can hold in our hands...And praise God, we are not only able to hear His word spoken to us from the pulpit, but we can also **read** it for ourselves...

Moreover, the folks in the early Church were mostly illiterate and couldn't read...but today, the majority of us are blessed with the literacy to do so...and so it is that we not only have a greater **ability** to understand, but we have a greater **responsibility** to follow what is being taught to us...

Listen to what it says about being a doer and following the word of God, in Psalm 119:104 & 105...

- I gain understanding from your precepts, therefore I hate every false way.
- Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path

Now, the lighted path may not be exactly what we thought it would be...but it is God's path of righteousness based on His precepts...coupled with a heritage of Spiritual vision and joy, it enables us to discern right from wrong...and in so doing, guides us in our walk of faith and allows us to be close to Him...

And so, as James had said in verse 25...remember, that as doers of the word and not just hearers, we act on God's words...we don't just hear and then pass it off lightly, giving lip-service only...And forgetfulness of what the word teaches us is no excuse either...but by **acting** in accordance with God's word, we are blessed...

Let's move on, now, to the next verse in James, verse 26...which reads...

V. 26 If anyone thinks he is religious, although he does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Again, James is pointing out that the use of the tongue is important as a sign of the Christian believer...but that by the **unbridled** use of our tongue, we show others the **shallow** depth of our faith...not only deceiving others, but ourselves as well...

So, if we consider ourselves as faithful believers, we must **act** and **speak** as God would have us...we must speak the truth with joy in our hearts, and act openly towards others with humility and servitude, especially the poor and needy...

Remember, it is by love that we are to conduct ourselves...and it is by the love that God bestowed upon us in the death of His Son, that we are saved from sin...and in being saved from our sin, we are free to live in faithfulness and truth, thereby fulfilling the word of God...

Hear what Jesus said about the truth of God's word, in John 8:31 & 32

- Then Jesus said to those Jews who had believed him, "If you continue in my word you are truly my disciples,
- and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Brothers and Sisters, it is the true word of God that sets us free...and it is in our exercise of mercy and holiness, that we are blessed to be humble servants of the Father...

I'm reasonably sure that most of you have heard the phrase, "Discretion is the better part of valor"...this is true in our speech and our actions...it can be sinful to not only treat others wrongly, but to speak to them wrongly as well...

Most of the time, the heart and the tongue go hand in hand...by speaking ill of someone, our heart is being hateful and we are filled with a sinful manner...but when we speak good of someone, our heart is delighted and free of sinful feelings...

Though it may be particularly hard to control our speech, when confronted by a vile and obnoxious person...we must remember, that as Christian believers, we cannot act or speak with a pious sanctity...reminiscent of someone who carries around a "holier than thou" attitude...we must be slow to anger and slow to respond...and when we do respond, we must be understanding and forgiving...for truly, Satan has his hand upon that individual...

Now, in verse 27, the last verse in this sermon, James says this...

V. 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

James is telling us that pure and undefiled religion carries with it a love for all, without dishonesty or false pretense...to relish in religious servitude with a passive and noble heart...to help others who are in need, especially those without a so-called Father...for like God, our Father in Heaven, we are to be kind and merciful...forgiving and loving...helpful and steadfast...for by praying and depending on God, and by acting in truthful service to others, we honor our heavenly Father...

Hear what Scripture says in Colossians 3 verses 2 & 8...

- Set your mind on the things above, not on the things on earth.
- But now you also lay aside all these things: anger, rage, wickedness, slander, abusive language from your mouth.

My Friends, I can assure you, that if your actions don't live up to what you say you believe, others will not take you seriously...If we claim to be Christians, we are to back-up what we say by what we do...this is not always easy...but however hard it is, "We must walk the walk and talk the talk"...

Although James wrote his Epistle to the Christian Jews dispersed from Jerusalem, his writing is absolutely relevant today...Clearly, James gives us such a wonderful model for how we are to act in our faith...his explanations represent a simple and straightforward example for Christian behavior, by encouraging us to live-out our faith with humble righteous acts...

- You know, It is said...that going to Church doesn't make you a Christian, any more that standing in the garage makes you a car...

Brothers and Sisters, before we close today, I want to challenge each of you to look in your mirror at home and see who you **claim** to be...so that when you start your day and walk out the door, you can be confident in your faith...confident, that as a Christian believer, you will "walk the walk and talk the talk"...

Please bow your heads and we'll close in prayer...

Gracious Father in heaven, we offer all praise and glory to you...thank you for the gift of life...thank you for providing for our needs...thank you for your steadfast love...thank you for guiding us by giving us your word to live by...you are the lamp upon our feet...give us the strength of faith to endure our temptations and deliver us from evil...Father, we are sinners and ask your forgiveness...we declare our humble service to you...and Father, thank you for the salvation provided to us by your Son, Jesus...and it is in His Holy name that we pray...AMEN