

7-30-23 Commitment Sunday

Sermon: Action Comes From Faith

Scripture: James 2:14-26, CTW Reading 697

Hymns: 694, 695, 696

Theme: We need to show our faith by what we do, not just simply put lip service to it. It is easy just to say, "yes I believe", but it's harder to prove it. Strive to prove your faith by your actions.

I. James hits us on the nose again...Faith without works is dead. Ouch! How often have we heard that while in the pews?

A. James talks about meeting people's needs as a way of showing faith. I want to take that a step further.

(14) What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.

16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead...OUCH!

In the previous verses of chapter 2, James talked about prejudice, pride and discrimination and he concluded with "Mercy triumphs over judgment."

***Putting that together with the reading this week, I see that James says a way of showing our faith by our deeds is to not be prejudiced or discriminatory **in the actual practice of our faith.**

Jesus taught us about this in **Matthew 6:1-4**. "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.²" "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have

received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

He told us not to do our acts in front of men but to do them in secret. Do not let our left hand know what your right hand is doing.

B. Our honor is not what is important. What is important is how we portray our faith in our everyday lives. Our actions must be out of mercy and compassion.

There is not a single example in the bible where Jesus Christ did anything to honor himself. Rather, he was always seeking to honor his father. His life was a living example of mercy and compassion.

Verse 18 reminds us "18 But some will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."

As believers in Jesus Christ, it is our responsibility to show our faith by our actions. No matter how long a person has believed, unless his actions show a belief, there is no way to tell.

II. How can a love that fills and changes your life not affect how you act? The answer is that it is not real belief but rather an intellectual agreement with the principles Of Jesus Christ.

Some of the more astute scholars I have read refer to this as "**intellectual assent.**" **We agree in principle with the call of God upon our lives...but not in practice!** That is not true belief or love. It is an incomplete faith with the beginning of a foundation but nothing really concrete to build upon!

A. If our lives were to remain unchanged, then we would not be an effective witness for Jesus Christ.

(19) "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that -- and shudder."

In **Luke 4:33-35**, the demons shouted in the synagogue! They knew who Jesus was. **They called him 'the holy one of God!'** I have to give the demons credit here, How many of us would recognize Jesus if we saw him? Yet the demons were in the synagogue and knew who Jesus was.

James says, you foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴ You see that a person is considered righteous **by what they do** and not by faith alone.

By the way, if you are not familiar with the history of Abraham and Isaac, read **Genesis 22**.

Abraham believed God and though Isaac was his only son, Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac to God. How many of us would have that kind of faith and take that action?

B. If God told you to do something that is completely against your heart, would you do it? If God asked you to give up something near and dear to your heart, something he had blessed you with and had answered your prayer for, would you give it up without worry?

Abraham did and it was credited to him as righteousness. It is important to observe that Abraham became the only man in the bible who has been referred to as God's friend. We need to come

to the realization that God's true heart for all of us is that we have the closeness of relationship with Him. **James makes the point that this closeness will never happen without action on our part. ACTION IS A REQUIREMENT OF TRUE FAITH!**

It is our actions that define our faith. **Faith that is felt from deep in your soul is a life altering faith. It will inspire action.**

James is telling us here that in a very practical and palatable sense, Our love of what Christ did for us will automatically drive us to have our life of service to the kingdom more closely mirror him!

The actions that our faith brings about will be an example of our belief. I am not saying that our actions will justify us because they will not. I am saying that out of love of Christ, **our faith will govern our actions and our actions will inspire others.**

Verse 25 addresses this: "In the same way, was not Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what **she did** when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?"

III. Remember that God is able to use everybody to suit his will. It is His plan, not ours.

A. Just because we have been given the gift of free will does not mean that God cannot use sinners just as he uses believers. God knows the hearts of all people. He knows what we will do before we do. His infinite wisdom governs the course of the entire world and each life.

As flawed humans filled with self-doubt we are tempted to have our first response to God' claim on our lives be: **"What in the world would HE want with Me!?"**

But James hits the nail on the head with this stark reminder: (26)
As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

B. We all know that we are sinners. While we are saved and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, we are still not perfect. **Even so, we must actively plan the way we carry out our faith.**

In one way or another, we all have fallen victim to sin in our lives. It is only by the mercy and compassion of Christ that we are forgiven these sins.

It is that same mercy which needs to drive our faith into action. We need to show our faith by what we do, not just simply put lip service to it. It is easy just to say, **"Yes I believe!"** but harder to prove it.

Strive to prove your faith by your actions. Not just your words!

Today is **Church Commitment Sunday** where like James we acknowledge the call for Christians to live a life of service to God's church!

I am asking all of us to prayerfully consider our current service and commitment to this church and determine how we can commit to going further and deeper as a bold act of faith.

But don't act as a result of MY call upon your time and talent! Pastors and plans and programs come and go, but God's grace and call upon our lives remains clear and constant.

Through His son Jesus and the Holy Spirit, God is calling us to step up for the good of the church and this community, as our individual response to blessings already given and received!

Amen? Let us pray...