

NEXT STEP: STUDY & SHARE

READINGS

Isaiah 35:4-7a

Psalm 146

I will praise the Lord as long as I live. (v2)

James 2:1-10, 14-18

Mark 7:24-37

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, throughout the ages you transform sickness into health & death into life. Open us to the power of your presence, & make us a people ready to proclaim your promises to the whole world, through Jesus Christ, our healer & Lord. Amen.

SERMON TEXT- James 2:1-10, 14-18

¹My brothers & sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? ²For if a person with gold rings & in fine clothes comes into your assembly, & if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, ³and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes & say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," ⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves, & become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers & sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith & to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? ⁷Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? ⁸You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ⁹But if you show partiality, you commit sin & are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers & sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked & lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm & eat your fill," & yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith & I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, & I by my works will show you my faith.

LISTENING TO . . .

GOD- *Christian life is rooted in the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*

1. St. James exposes our greedy, covetous hearts (*James 2:4*) in attending to others. Jesus subverts all this in the gospel lesson (*cf. 7:20-23*). How do the woman & the man illustrate what St. James writes in *James 2:5*? *See Matthew 5:1-12, 25:31-46; Romans 6:3-4*
2. St. James is usually understood to be Jesus' (step-) brother. What similarities do you find in their messages, particularly in this section (1:22--2:26)? *Compare 1:22 & Matthew 7:21, 24-27; Luke 6:46, 8:21; John 13:17 | 1:27 & MT 25:36 | 2:4 & JN 7:24 | 2:5 & MT 5:3; LK 6:20, 12:32 | 2:8 & MK 12:31, JN 15:12, 17 | 2:10 & MT 5:19 | 2:13 & MT 6:15, 18:32-35, 6:38 | 2:18 & MT 7:16, 17 | 2:19 & MT 8:29; MK 1:24, 5:7; LK 4:33, 34*

EACH OTHER- *Sharing & growing with our brothers & sisters in Christ*

3. Review *1 Peter & 1 John*. How well does St. James fit with these Apostles? *See 1 Peter 1:22 3:8, 4:8; 1 John 3:11-23, 4:7-12* How does this (re-) frame your outlook on good works? Where do you have specific, concrete room for improvement?
4. The Lutheran insight that apart from faith in Jesus all our works are but filthy rags is most certainly true (*cf. Isaiah 64:6*). Is St. James implying otherwise (i.e. that our works can be righteous apart from faithfulness)? How can you keep from misunderstanding him that way?

NEIGHBORS- *Bearing fruit for those not yet our brothers & sisters*

5. Many claim to have a faith of feelings or knowledge (*v14*) yet they don't love God or neighbor as the Bible describes (worship, right doctrine, study, prayer, evangelism, comfort & consolation, generosity & tithing, chastity, etc.). How can you & your congregation show & tell a better way? *See Galatians 5:16-26*
6. Author & theologian RR Reno observes that our cultural value (religion?) of "non-judgmentalism" morality serves the rich who can out-earn or overrule (*cf. v6*) their vices & errors while the poor are left behind to suffer homes broken by social maladies (divorce, single-parenthood, drug addictions, etc.). These same poor folks are almost entirely absent from Christian congregations. What good news & good works (*vv15-17*) would James have us share with them instead of our cultural betters & elites?

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16th Sunday after Pentecost

09.08.24

Series: Prove It!

Rev. Jared Stillions, STS

Faith active in love

Proof by Love

*How often we show attention to those whom
we wish to personally benefit from!*

-Notes-

KEY VERSE: So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (v17)

-NEXT STEPS MEMORY VERSE-

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. (*Philippians 4:4*)

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