

**James 2:1-26**

**September 9, '18**

**“ONE AND THE OTHER”**

**YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED OUR ORDER OF THINGS HAS CHANGED EVER SO SLIGHTLY THIS MORNING.**

**AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, WE MADE AN ADJUSTMENT IN THE ROLE OF THE LITURGIST IN WORSHIP.**

**PREVIOUSLY, THE LITURGIST WOULD LEAD US IN THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION & THE CREED.**

**NOW, IT'S THE OFFERTORY PRAYER & SCRIPTURE.**

**I MUST TELL YOU THAT EVERY WEEK WHILE WE SING THE DOXOLOGY WITH THE USHERS COMING FORWARD WITH THE OFFERING PLATES, I HAVE TO REMIND MYSELF NOT TO SAY – “LET US PRAY...” AND GIVE THE OFFERTORY PRAYER.**

**REST ASSURED, IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN SOME SUNDAY & THE LITURGIST WILL BE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO HANDLE IT – *“DO I INTERRUPT HIM & TELL HIM I’M SUPPOSED TO DO THAT? DO I STEP DOWN FROM THE PULPIT & GO BACK TO MY SEAT?”***

**TO THE ONE TO WHOM THIS HAPPENS, YOU MIGHT TRY A LOUD CLEAR OF THE THROAT – THAT MIGHT BRING ME BACK TO MY ROLE AS THE ONE TAKING THE PLATES, NOT LEADING THE PRAYER.**

**TODAY, THOUGH, YOU NOTICE WE’RE NOT FOLLOWING OUR NEW PROCEDURE.**

**ALLEN LED THE CREED & THE OFFERTORY PRAYER – AND TODAY WASN’T THE SUNDAY FOR ME TO FORGET & THINK THE OFFERTORY PRAYER WAS MINE.**

**THE SCRIPTURE READING DIDN'T FOLLOW THE OFFERTORY PRAYER, THOUGH, BECAUSE I WANT US TO CONSIDER IT IN ITS CONTEXT.**

**I THINK THAT'S VITALLY IMPORTANT TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE PASSAGE WE'LL HEAR THIS MORNING.**

**FIRST OF ALL, LET'S CONSIDER A BIT OF BACKGROUND.**

**THIS IS THE LECTIONARY EPISTLE READING FOR TODAY.**

**ACTUALLY, WHAT WE'LL HEAR IS MORE THAN WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THE LECTIONARY.**

**THE LECTIONARY READING INCLUDES THE FIRST 13 VERSES OF THE SECOND CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF JAMES.**

**I WAS SURPRISED AT THAT, BUT THEN I ASSUMED THE REST OF THE CHAPTER WOULD BE FOUND ON ANOTHER SUNDAY IN THE LECTIONARY – PERHAPS EVEN NEXT WEEK.**

**I WAS EVEN MORE SURPRISED WHEN I DISCOVERED THAT THE REST OF CHAPTER DOESN'T APPEAR AT ALL IN THE THREE-YEAR LECTIONARY CYCLE!**

**THEREFORE, WE'LL HEAR THE ENTIRE SECOND CHAPTER OF JAMES TODAY.**

**I SAID THAT THIS IS THE LECTIONARY “EPISTLE” READING FOR TODAY.**

**THAT MEANS THAT IT'S FOUND IN THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT ARE LABELLED AS LETTERS.**

**MOST OF THOSE ARE LETTERS OF THE APOSTLE  
PAUL.**

**THIS ONE IS “THE LETTER OF JAMES.”**

**I’M NOT CONVINCED, THOUGH, THAT IT FITS  
THAT CATEGORY.**

**I’LL SAY MORE ABOUT THAT IN A MINUTE.**

**FIRST OF ALL, LET’S CONSIDER THE AUTHORSHIP  
OF JAMES.**

**THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES AND  
WHILE WE DON’T KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHO WROTE  
IT, I THINK THE STRONGEST EVIDENCE SUGGESTS  
THAT IT WAS, IN FACT, WRITTEN BY THE JAMES IN  
THE NEW TESTAMENT WHO WAS THE BROTHER OF  
JESUS.**

**NOW - BACK TO THE REASON I DON’T THINK THIS  
FITS THE CATEGORY OF BEING A “LETTER.”**

**I THINK IT'S A SERMON.**

**FROM BEGINNING TO END, IT SOUNDS LIKE A  
SERMON WE'RE BEING GIVEN BY JAMES.**

**I WANT YOU TO IMAGINE HOW THIS MIGHT BE  
TRUE.**

**JAMES, ONE OF THE GREAT LEADERS OF THE  
EARLY CHURCH, HAS SEEN THINGS TAKING PLACE IN  
THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AS THEY GATHER  
TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP – THINGS THAT HE FINDS  
VERY TROUBLING.**

**ONE SABBATH MORNING, JAMES IS TO DELIVER  
THE SERMON.**

**IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER THINGS HE SAYS, HE  
LOOKS OUT AT THE BELIEVERS GATHERED  
TOGETHER – STEPS AWAY FROM WHATEVER PODIUM**

**HE MAY HAVE BEEN STANDING BEHIND & GETS  
DOWNRIGHT PERSONAL.**

**HE SAYS (AND THIS IS HOW IT COMES TO US IN  
WHAT WE KNOW AS THE REVISED STANDARD  
VERSION OF THE BIBLE) -**

***MY BRETHREN, SHOW NO PARTIALITY AS YOU HOLD  
THE FAITH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE LORD OF  
GLORY. <sup>2</sup> FOR IF A MAN WITH GOLD RINGS AND IN FINE  
CLOTHING COMES INTO YOUR ASSEMBLY, AND A POOR  
MAN IN SHABBY CLOTHING ALSO COMES IN, <sup>3</sup> AND YOU  
PAY ATTENTION TO THE ONE WHO WEARS THE FINE  
CLOTHING AND SAY, "HAVE A SEAT HERE, PLEASE,"  
WHILE YOU SAY TO THE POOR MAN, "STAND THERE,"  
OR, "SIT AT MY FEET," <sup>4</sup> HAVE YOU NOT MADE  
DISTINCTIONS AMONG YOURSELVES, AND BECOME  
JUDGES WITH EVIL THOUGHTS?***

***<sup>5</sup> LISTEN, MY BELOVED BRETHREN. HAS NOT GOD CHOSEN THOSE WHO ARE POOR IN THE WORLD TO BE RICH IN FAITH AND HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM WHICH HE HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM? <sup>6</sup> BUT YOU HAVE DISHONORED THE POOR MAN. IS IT NOT THE RICH WHO OPPRESS YOU, IS IT NOT THEY WHO DRAG YOU INTO COURT? <sup>7</sup> IS IT NOT THEY WHO BLASPHEME THE HONORABLE NAME WHICH WAS INVOKED OVER YOU?***

***<sup>8</sup> IF YOU REALLY FULFIL THE ROYAL LAW, ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURE, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” YOU DO WELL. <sup>9</sup> BUT IF YOU SHOW PARTIALITY, YOU COMMIT SIN, AND ARE CONVICTED BY THE LAW AS TRANSGRESSORS. <sup>10</sup> FOR WHOEVER KEEPS THE WHOLE LAW BUT FAILS IN ONE POINT HAS BECOME GUILTY OF ALL OF IT. <sup>11</sup> FOR HE WHO SAID, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” SAID ALSO,***



***“DO NOT KILL.” IF YOU DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY BUT DO KILL, YOU HAVE BECOME A TRANSGRESSOR OF THE LAW. <sup>12</sup> SO SPEAK AND SO ACT AS THOSE WHO ARE TO BE JUDGED UNDER THE LAW OF LIBERTY. <sup>13</sup> FOR JUDGMENT IS WITHOUT MERCY TO ONE WHO HAS SHOWN NO MERCY; YET MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGMENT.***

***<sup>14</sup> WHAT DOES IT PROFIT, MY BRETHREN, IF A MAN SAYS HE HAS FAITH BUT HAS NOT WORKS? CAN HIS FAITH SAVE HIM? <sup>15</sup> IF A BROTHER OR SISTER IS ILL-CLAD AND IN LACK OF DAILY FOOD, <sup>16</sup> AND ONE OF YOU SAYS TO THEM, “GO IN PEACE, BE WARMED AND FILLED,” WITHOUT GIVING THEM THE THINGS NEEDED FOR THE BODY, WHAT DOES IT PROFIT? <sup>17</sup> SO FAITH BY ITSELF, IF IT HAS NO WORKS, IS DEAD.***

***<sup>18</sup> BUT SOME ONE WILL SAY, “YOU HAVE FAITH AND I HAVE WORKS.” SHOW ME YOUR FAITH APART FROM YOUR WORKS, AND I BY MY WORKS WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH. <sup>19</sup> YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD IS ONE; YOU DO WELL. EVEN THE DEMONS BELIEVE—AND SHUDDER. <sup>20</sup> DO YOU WANT TO BE SHOWN, YOU SHALLOW MAN, THAT FAITH APART FROM WORKS IS BARREN? <sup>21</sup> WAS NOT ABRAHAM OUR FATHER JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, WHEN HE OFFERED HIS SON ISAAC UPON THE ALTAR? <sup>22</sup> YOU SEE THAT FAITH WAS ACTIVE ALONG WITH HIS WORKS, AND FAITH WAS COMPLETED BY WORKS, <sup>23</sup> AND THE SCRIPTURE WAS FULFILLED WHICH SAYS, “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS”; AND HE WAS CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD. <sup>24</sup> YOU SEE THAT A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY WORKS AND NOT BY FAITH ALONE. <sup>25</sup> AND IN THE SAME***

***WAY WAS NOT ALSO RAHAB THE HARLOT JUSTIFIED BY WORKS WHEN SHE RECEIVED THE MESSENGERS AND SENT THEM OUT ANOTHER WAY? <sup>26</sup> FOR AS THE BODY APART FROM THE SPIRIT IS DEAD, SO FAITH APART FROM WORKS IS DEAD.***”

**I HOPE THAT HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I THINK THIS BOOK OF THE BIBLE SOUNDS A LOT MORE LIKE A SERMON THAN IT DOES A LETTER & WHY I WANTED TO CONSIDER IT IN ITS PROPER CONTEXT.**

**WHAT WE CALL THE LETTER OF JAMES – AND SPECIFICALLY THIS PASSAGE – IS OFTEN THOUGHT OF AS BEING CONTRADICTORY TO THE APOSTLE PAUL.**

**MARTIN LUTHER WANTED TO HAVE IT REMOVED FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CALLED IT “*AN EPISTLE OF STRAW.*”**

**THE REASON IS BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO RUN  
COUNTER TO PAUL'S EMPHASIS ON SALVATION BY  
FAITH ALONE.**

**IT APPEARS AS THOUGH WHAT JAMES IS SAYING  
IN THE WORDS WE'VE READ THIS MORNING, IS THAT  
WE ARE SAVED – NOT BY FAITH – BUT BY WORKS.**

**I DON'T THINK THAT'S AT ALL WHAT HE'S SAYING  
HERE.**

**WHAT HE'S SAYING IS THAT FAITH & WORKS ARE  
INSEPARABLE.**

**FAITH & WORKS AREN'T CONTRADICTORY –  
THEY'RE COMPLEMENTARY.**

**IT'S NOT A MATTER OF CHOOSING ONE OR THE  
OTHER.**

**IT IS INCUMBENT UPON US TO FOCUS ON BOTH –  
FAITH & WORKS GO TOGETHER.**

**IT'S NOT ONE OR THE OTHER – IT'S ONE AND THE OTHER.**

**WE AREN'T SAVED *BY* WORKS – WE ARE SAVED *FOR* WORKS.**

**JAMES IS SAYING THAT SOMEONE WHO TRULY BELIEVES IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD & THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD CANNOT HELP BUT ACT ON THAT FAITH BY DOING GOOD WORKS.**

**HE'S SAYING YOU CAN TELL WHAT SOMEONE BELIEVES BY THE WAY THEY LIVE THEIR LIFE.**

**IF THEY AREN'T ACTING ON THE THINGS THEY SAY THEY BELIEVE, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THEY REALLY DON'T BELIEVE THOSE THINGS IN THE FIRST PLACE.**

**WHAT GOOD IS OUR FAITH IF THAT FAITH ISN'T LIVED OUT IN OUR ACTIONS?**

**OUR PURPOSE AS A CHURCH – AND OUR PURPOSE AS INDIVIDUAL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST – ISN'T TO BELIEVE IN A SET OF DOCTRINES & ADHERE TO A STRING OF RULES.**

**OUR PURPOSE IS TO LIVE AS CHRIST LIVED & SERVE AS CHRIST SERVED.**

**IF WE'RE NOT DOING THAT, THEN WHY ARE WE HERE AT ALL?!**

**WHAT PURPOSE DOES THE CHURCH SERVE IF NOT TO LIVE OUT WHAT WE SAY WE BELIEVE ON THE *INSIDE* THROUGH OUR DAILY ACTIONS ON THE *OUTSIDE*?**

**IF A CHURCH ISN'T DOING THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST, THEN IT REALLY ISN'T A CHURCH!**

**IT MAY BE A SOCIAL GATHERING OR COUNTRY CLUB OR POLITICAL ACTION GROUP, BUT IT ISN'T A CHURCH.**

**WORKS OF LOVE & JUSTICE & MERCY STAND AT THE HEART OF WHO WE ARE & EVERYTHING WE SAY WE BELIEVE.**

**EVERY ASPECT OF OUR FAITH MUST BE LIVED OUT IN OUR ACTIONS ON BEHALF OF THOSE IN NEED.**

**THAT'S WHAT OUR OPENING SUNDAY SCHOOL COURSE IS ABOUT THIS YEAR.**

**IT'S CALLED "BELIEVE" AND IT FOCUSES ON BOTH THE THEOLOGICAL COMPONENTS OF OUR FAITH AS WELL AS LIVING THEM OUT IN OUR DAILY LIFE.**

**WE JUST COMPLETED A FOUR-WEEK SERIES ON *"SECULAR SONGS THAT SPEAK TO THE SOUL."***

**THERE'S ONE THAT WE DIDN'T USE THAT I KNOW I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE IS ONE OF MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE SONGS – A SONG THAT, TO ME, SPEAKS AS CLEARLY AS ANY SONG EVER WRITTEN TO THIS MESSAGE WE'VE HEARD THIS MORNING FROM JAMES.**

**IT'S "*BE OUR GUEST*" FROM "*BEAUTY & THE BEAST.*"**

**RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SONG, WITH MRS. POTTS & CHIP OVERJOYED AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE SOMEONE – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN WAITING MORE THAN 10 YEARS TO EXPERIENCE – WE HEAR LUMIERE SING –**

***"LIFE IS SO UNNERVING FOR A SERVANT WHO'S NOT SERVING - HE'S NOT WHOLE WITHOUT A SOUL TO WAIT UPON..."***



**THOSE WORDS COULD HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY  
JAMES TO HELP US UNDERSTAND HOW ABSOLUTELY  
ESSENTIAL IT IS FOR US TO BRING OUR FAITH TO LIFE  
THROUGH OUR WORKS.**

**IF WE TRULY *ARE* FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST,  
WE ARE ONLY MADE WHOLE WHEN WE HAVE A SOUL  
TO WAIT UPON – WHEN WE ARE DOING GOOD DEEDS  
THAT BRING OUR FAITH TO LIFE.**

**THAT’S WHAT MAKES THE CHURCH THE  
INFLUENTIAL POWER THAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN  
THE WORLD.**

**THAT’S WHY THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS MADE A  
DIFFERENCE IN THIS NATION.**

**IT’S BECAUSE IT IS FROM THE CHURCH THAT  
DEEDS OF LOVE & MERCY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN  
INITIATED.**

**YOU PROBABLY KNOW THESE FAMOUS WORDS OF  
ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE IN HIS 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WORK  
DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA.**

**AFTER HAVING VISITED THIS COUNTRY FROM  
FRANCE, HE WROTE –**

***“I SOUGHT FOR THE GREATNESS AND GENIUS OF  
AMERICA IN HER COMMODIOUS HARBORS AND HER  
AMPLE RIVERS – AND IT WAS NOT THERE . . . IN HER  
FERTILE FIELDS AND BOUNDLESS FORESTS AND IT WAS  
NOT THERE . . . IN HER RICH MINES AND HER VAST  
WORLD COMMERCE – AND IT WAS NOT THERE . . . IN HER  
DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS AND HER MATCHLESS  
CONSTITUTION – AND IT WAS NOT THERE.***

***NOT UNTIL I WENT INTO THE CHURCHES OF  
AMERICA AND HEARD HER PULPITS AFLAME WITH***

***RIGHTEOUSNESS DID I UNDERSTAND THE SECRET OF  
HER GENIUS AND POWER.***

***AMERICA IS GREAT BECAUSE SHE IS GOOD, AND IF  
AMERICA EVER CEASES TO BE GOOD, SHE WILL CEASE  
TO BE GREAT.”***

**DE TOCQUEVILLE FOUND THAT AMERICA’S  
CHURCHES WERE AFLAME WITH WHAT HE CALLED  
“RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

**AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN – TO BE FILLED  
WITH “RIGHTEOUSNESS?”**

**JAMES USES THE WORD IN THIS PASSAGE WHEN  
HE’S TALKING ABOUT ABRAHAM.**

**HE TELLS US THAT OUR CHRISTIAN  
COMMITMENT IS A “*ONE AND THE OTHER*” KIND OF  
THING – OUR FAITH & OUR WORKS MUST BE BOUND  
INSEPARABLY TOGETHER.**

**IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, WE FIND A CLEAR DEFINITION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHEN WE READ THESE WORDS: “*THE RIGHTEOUS KNOW THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR; THE WICKED HAVE NO SUCH UNDERSTANDING.*”**

**THAT’S WHAT ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE DISCOVERED WHEN HE SEARCHED FOR THE GREATNESS OF AMERICA.**

**HE FOUND ITS GREATNESS IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ITS CHURCHES – “...*KNOWING THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR.*”**

**JAMES – THE VERY BROTHER OF OUR LORD – STOOD BEFORE A CONGREGATION SUCH AS THIS & DECLARED PRECISELY THE SAME THING – WHEN WE KNOW THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR & WHEN WE DO WHAT WE CAN TO REACH OUT & MEET ANOTHER’S**

**NEEDS – WHEN WE PUT OUR FAITH & OUR WORKS  
TOGETHER – WHEN WE RECOGNIZE IT HAS TO BE  
“ONE AND THE OTHER” – IT IS THEN THAT WE FIND  
GREATNESS.**

**IT IS IN DOING GOOD FOR OTHERS – AND IF WE  
CEASE DOING GOOD, THEN WE CEASE TO BE GREAT.**

**IT IS “ONE AND THE OTHER” – FAITH & WORKS –  
THAT ENABLE US TO TRULY LIVE OUT OUR CALLING  
AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.**

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