

The 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
September 5th, 2021

“Real faith that shows royal love”  
(James 2:18-19)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Today’s text for this 15th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading – James 2:18-19.

**“But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”**

Here ends our text.

I. Real faith shown by royal works

Faith and works. They go hand in hand. James is saying that you cannot have one without the other. The new man in a believer of Christ wants to exercise his or her faith in Christ by serving the Lord and his or her neighbor with works of love.

The believer in Christ has this passion because the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer and makes His temple in the believer. The Holy Spirit gives faith to make the confession that “Jesus is my Lord” and then spurs the Christian to acts of royal love as James describes the great commandment of loving the one true God with all your heart, mind and soul and your neighbor as yourself.

It’s the new life of the Christian, being fed and forgiven by the word of God and the sacraments and then praising God with a life of service to Him and one’s fellow neighbor. There cannot faith without works. It’s like breathing in and breathing out. If there are no works, then there is no faith. Then there is no presence of the Holy Spirit. Then there is no new man.

So after receiving the Lord's supper in just a few minutes, after having eaten and drunk the very body and blood of Christ for our forgiveness, our soul is fed and refreshed and what do we immediately pray?

*"We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another;"*

Faith and works. They are not in opposition but live in beautiful harmony by the power of the Holy Spirit. Works are the evidence of this living harmony. So, verse 19 is so important to our understanding of what real faith is.

**"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"**

Yes, the devil believes there is one true God. But, there is no trust, only trembling! For the demons tremble in the presence of God because they have rejected God and therefore know only His unrelenting, absolute eternal wrath and punishment. They cannot ever do a good work. Their works are evil. The devil is the father of lies. As we heard last week in Ephesians 6, we need to put on the whole armor of God to defend ourselves against the wiles of the devil, against his flaming darts of wickedness.

And most especially, we must put on the Gospel shoes of peace to tell others of the Good News in Christ so that the Holy Spirit would create new faith and release poor captives of the devil to freedom in Christ! Oh yes! That is a beautiful example of faith and works in action.

**"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Roman 10:15)**

There are no good works that come from the devil, only deceit and lies. And there are no good works that come from the hypocrite who feigns faith but in his or her heart there is only darkness.

Oh how Jesus condemned the Pharisees lack of faith in Matthew 23.

**"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation." (Matthew 23:14)**

Lack of faith shows a real lack of love for God and neighbor. Especially, the unbeliever seeks out the weakest to devour, takes advantage of those who cannot defend themselves, like the unborn. Instead of helping those in need, disdains and rejects them.

Listen how James concludes the first chapter.

**“21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”**

James tells us that the word of God alone saves our souls. By grace we are saved through faith...only the work of God saves us that He alone implants in our hearts.

We just finished the book of Ephesians and Paul clearly told us in chapter 2 that man is not saved by works but by grace lest any man should boast. Lutherans know this passage very well.

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)**

Yet, Paul says that faith is never alone. For in the very next verse, he tells us about the new life in Jesus.

**“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)**

In faith we are created in Christ for this new purpose of doing good works. God even prepared them for us ahead of time to walk in them!

Real faith and royal works going hand in hand by the grace of God!!

So what does James say after he tells us that we are saved by the implanted word? Listen to the very next verses!

**22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

Only by the work of God does a real believer in Christ become a royal doer of His work. The Gospel has freed a believer, given complete liberty...to love!

**26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**

Faith and works go hand in hand. Especially real faith shows itself by showing real love to the weakest and those who cannot repay you...the poor, widows, orphans.

How easy it is, James tells us in our epistle reading, to show preference to the rich and overlook the poor.

**“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4)**

## II. Real faith fed by the real, impartial works of the royal love of God

Partiality. Favoritism. Racism. Whatever “ism” you want to label it. Wherever there is a lack of love, there is sin. It's all the result of sin. We are all guilty of not loving our neighbor as ourselves and not keeping the royal law. As James tells us in our epistle,

**“if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:9-10)**

It's impossible to be saved by our works! But thanks be to God that we are saved by the real, impartial, wondrous work of the love of God in Christ!

For God is not impartial, but gave His only begotten Son for the salvation of the whole world (John 3:16).

We just finished our walk through Ephesians where we heard about the mystery of God's church that it includes both Jews and Gentiles! God broke down the dividing wall between them we heard in Ephesians 2:11-19 and brought them both into the one true Christian church, the one body of Christ. One faith, one Lord, one baptism. You believe in the one true God. You do well!

God loves all people! Yes, especially He doesn't overlook the poor. So, James says in verse 5 of our epistle.

**“Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (James 2:5)**

As I was driving to the ordination service yesterday morning of Chad Bresson in Los Fresnos, I noticed a new billboard on the expressway in San Benito. It said, *“Serve the poor like Jesus did”*.

Whoever put up this billboard must have had James 2 in mind. For indeed Jesus served the poor, He served all people rich and poor by giving His life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28).

And, there are so many examples of how Jesus served the humbled. Just look at today's Gospel. The woman from pagan region of Sidon came for help for her demon possessed daughter. The evil works of the devil were manifest, but Jesus' work of love was about to overcome the devil's faithless work.

Jesus tested her. He wanted to hear her express her real faith and trust in Him. You shouldn't give the children's bread to the little dogs, He told her. But her answer was quick and full of faith. But even the little dogs get the crumbs that fall from the table. There is love from God for the Gentiles too, for all people, for the rich and for the most destitute.

Another beautiful story from the Old Testament comes from this same pagan region of Sidon. God had caused a severe drought because the Israelites were following the false gods of the Baals. There was no real faith and so God punished them to cause repentance.

Well, everyone was feeling the effects of this 3 year drought including the prophet Elijah. But God took care of him, feeding him by the ravens and then he sent him to be fed by a poor widow of Sidon. Yes, Jesus said,

**“I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.” (Luke 4:25-26)**

There God showed loved to this poor Gentile widow and made sure that her oil and flour didn't run out. And Elijah raised her son from the dead. God doesn't overlook anyone, from the greatest to the least.

**“but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” (1 Corinthians 1:23-26)**

Christ crucified...for you who are not mighty and noble. For God does not show partiality, but has love the whole world, including you and me! He has given you a real faith and has called you to show His same love to all people whether they are rich or poor, or whatever social standing they are in. Faith and works go hand in hand. Real faith and royal works of love, all by the grace of God! To the one true God be all glory. Amen.

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**