

SERMON - THE 5TH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER - 27 APRIL 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

James 1:22-24 (KJV)

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

Saint James goes on from the place where today's Epistle ends to say ***James 2:17 (KJV)*** *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* or in a modern translation, ***James 2:17 (ESV)*** *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

We have talked many times about faith and how faith as the writer of Hebrews says, ***Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)*** *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Today is Rogation Sunday, the Sunday set aside for us to pray for a good crop. In these times, hands on agriculture is almost a foreign act for many of us. But, I feel that most of us know that farming, even gardening, requires that we put a lot of effort, a lot of work, into the production of a successful harvest.

And, in spite of all that we might do, we are still dependent on God's providence. We need the proper amount of rain, sun and temperature for a good crop.

We have to have faith in God. But, we also have to put a lot of work into it.

So today we hear that along with faith we have to put some effort into the mix of living a Christian life.

Living our lives in Jesus *does* require action on our part. There is an old heresy called *antinomianism*. That mouthful of a word describes the view that Christians are by grace

set free from the need of observing any moral law.

It would seem if anyone had any tiny bit of common sense, they would reject such a notion but how often do we feel that all we have to do as Christians is to show up for an hour or so on Sunday morning.

If that is all we do for our belief in Christ, for our devotion to our Lord, isn't it almost as bad. We haven't violated any moral laws but we sure have not shown much commitment to our faith.

Faith alone is not enough in spite of what Martin Luther may have said. (Sorry 'bout that to our Lutheran hosts.)

Faith alone or faith without works is dead, dead faith. Dead faith is not any better than no faith.

James talks about this in **James 2:18 (KJV)** *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

Jesus tells us in this parable, **Matthew 25:42-45 (KJV)** *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: ⁴³I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.*

⁴⁴*Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*

⁴⁵*Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

Remember the words from Saint James, **James 2:17 (ESV)** *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

We, as Christians, are called on by our Lord to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit those in need. All of us are called to this task, not just us clergy, all of us as followers of Jesus, as disciples of Jesus.

But, if our only effort is to make it to church on an occasional Sunday morning, we are not getting the “works” part of this mix down a-tall.

To be a Christian requires sometimes more than just a little sacrifice on each of our parts.

If we are not doing our part, if we are not carrying our cross, we may be in trouble.

***Matthew 10:37-38 (KJV)** He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

And, again as Saint James put it so well so many years ago, ***James 2:18 (ESV)** But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

It's like Mom and apple pie or pizza and beer, you can't have one without the other. You can't have faith without works. It just won't work.

Amen.

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