

Order of Worship for September 5, 2021

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: “Lord of Glory, You have Bought Us” - Hymn # 851

Confession and Forgiveness: p. 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: The LORD is the strength of His people;

C: He is the saving refuge of His anointed.

P: To You, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me,

C: lest, if You be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.

P: Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to You for help,

C: when I lift up my hands toward Your most holy sanctuary.

P: Blessèd be the LORD!

C: For He has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

P: The LORD is my strength and my shield; in Him my heart trusts, and I am helped;

C: my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to Him.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: The LORD is the strength of His people;

C: He is the saving refuge of His anointed.

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy) p. 152-3

Hymn of Praise (“This Is the Feast”) p. 155

Salutation p. 156

Prayer of the Day:

P: O Lord, let Your merciful ears be open to the prayers of Your humble servants and grant that what they ask may be in accord with Your gracious will; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 35:4–7a

R: Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: James 2:1–10, 14–18

R: My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, 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? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. . . .

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

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.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse: (p. 156)

Holy Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 7th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord (sung).

P: [Jesus] returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. And they brought to Him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged Him to lay His hand on him. And taking him aside from the crowd privately, He put His fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more He charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were

astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ (sung).**

Sermon Hymn: “*O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace*” - Hymn # 693

Sermon: “‘Faith’ or ‘Deed’ Christians?” - James 2

What comes first, the chicken or the egg?

The chicken. It told the egg a funny joke, and he cracked up and died.

First came the egg, then the chicken, then rice, dessert, and the bill.

What comes first, our salvation or the good life we are to lead as Christians? If we center on St. Paul who wrote the book of Romans, it seems clear that faith is what saves. Paul quotes the words from Genesis that say, “Abraham believed in God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” That should settle it. Faith, not works, saves us. There is nothing we have to do to be in a saving relationship with God.

We all get messages on the internet promising that if we sign up for this or that, we will get all kinds of benefits free of charge. If we have any life experience we know that it’s wise to ignore those messages. People can promise us all kinds of “free” stuff, but in the end there is always a catch, always something we have to pay. People get signed up to time shares that promise great places to stay at a great price. But then they get trapped in paying ever increasing prices to maintain the property.

That is what influences how we see being saved through faith. It seems too easy, too simple, too free. And we see the words of James in our second lesson. This is how he describes Abraham:

Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 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. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

It sounds as though James is saying, in opposition to Paul, that Abraham was saved not by faith alone, but also by what he did. It is as if James is saying that you do need faith, but it takes faith plus actions to save you.

That understanding fits more in what we experience in life. We have to work for what we get. Employers have to have the faith that we will do a good job when they hire us, but we still have to prove that by how we perform. It is the same with those who give out scholarships. And even when people do things for us for free, there is often a catch, like they might want a favor in return from us in the future.

In addition to that the Bible seems to tell us that if we do not do well, we will be punished. Before the words in our second lesson from James we read, “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom.” This seems to coincide with the words of Jesus when He tells the disciples that He will come on the last day to judge the living

and the dead. And this judgment will be based on what we do or fail to do. That sure sounds like our future depends not on what we believe, but what we do,

That may sound reasonable to us especially in how we experience life, but then our salvation depends not on Jesus, but what we do. We could say that it is 50-50 or even 90-10 Him and us. But even if even a small amount depends on us, then we are in big trouble. We sin. God created us without sin. Even if we have say only a tiny speck of sin, that spoils it all. The Bible uses the illustration of leaven, yeast. All it takes is a tiny bit to spread through the whole loaf. Either our salvation depends 100% on Jesus or we have no chance.

So is James telling us we are saved by works, not faith? Martin Luther saw how people could think that way. That is why he called James an epistle of straw. That is why it is vital to see the audience to James' letter. Paul in Romans was writing to Christians in the capital of the pagan world. Many of those Christians were converted pagans. James was written to the early church in Jerusalem, a church filled with Christian Jews. These were people born and raised in devout Jewish families who had faith in God and knew His Word through the Old Testament. In Rome Paul was dealing with Christians who thought the non-Jewish Christians needed to obey the Old Testament laws given to the Jews. They were tempted to think that doing those laws was part of what saved them. In James' situation the people all lived in those laws, not to be saved, but because that is how they were raised. Their problem was expressed earlier by James this way:

Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

In light of this James reminds them of God's judgment. That judgment is not the condemnation that those who reject Jesus will receive in the end. This is the judgment only for believers, the ones that will see how rich or how empty our lives have been because of what we do with the salvation God gives to us in Jesus. As James says, "Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful." James is talking to Christians alone, showing them that they shouldn't use their belief in God as an excuse to not show mercy as God does.

Faith alone saves us. It is totally the work of God, so that we can be 100% certain of it. But that saving is never **alone**. Faith never exists on its own. It produces the love that moves us to love as God first loved us. I heard it best explained as the "follow through" in sports. When you hit a baseball, a golf ball, or a tennis ball, there always needs to be follow through. The follow through happens after the ball has left you, but if you don't have it, then you haven't hit it correctly. The follow through is not necessary for hitting the ball, but as the necessary result of hitting the ball. If we really have faith in God, there will be results. We will want to hear God's Word. We will want to help others without expecting anything in return. We will forgive as we have been forgiven. And this happens not because we have to, but because we want to as people of faith.

We see this in Abraham. When Paul says that Abraham was "justified," he is talking about his legal situation. When a person was "justified" in a court, it meant that justice was done, the person received a punishment. But justified by faith means that justice is done through faith in Jesus, who took the punishment for us on the cross. Without any action on his own,

Abraham was forgiven and put right with God through faith in God's promises, which came true in Jesus. Abraham had faith in God in Genesis 15 long before Genesis 22 when he showed evidence of that faith by being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. James uses "justify" in the sense of proof. A person can "justify" what she says by giving evidence to back it up. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son Isaac in obedience to God was proof that he had faith. That act did not save Abraham, but gave evidence that he had saving faith.

There is no contest between "faith" versus "deeds" Christians. They are two sides of the same coin. When we have faith, the results of that, what the Bible calls the "fruits" of it will be there. They work together. As we go to Church, receive Holy Communion, gather with other Christians, and hear God's Word, He strengthens our faith so that we want to do the deeds. And as we practice the deeds, that exercises that faith so that all the more want to have our faith strengthened. James urges us to not show partiality, to give not to receive in return, but out of God's love that leads us to depend all the more on God. And as we get into God's Word and hear the Gospel we are more moved to love as God loves us.

Faith and works—it is what we are in Christ Jesus. God bless us to trust totally in what He has done for us in Jesus and to live that out in response.

Nicene Creed:

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in Your mercy;

C: hear our prayer.

Service of the Sacrament

Preface p. 160

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

P: It is truly good, right, and proper. . .

Sanctus (*"Holy, Holy, Holy"*): p.161

Prayer of Thanksgiving

(Pastor)

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer and Words of our Lord p.162

Peace of the Lord and Agnus Dei (*"Lamb of God"*) p. 163

Distribution of Holy Communion:

"Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace" - **Hymn #844**

“How Clear is our Vocation, Lord” - Hymn #853

Dismissal

Song After Communion: *“Thank the Lord”* p. 164

Prayer After Communion:

P: Let us pray...

C: Amen.

Blessing p.166 (sung)

Closing Hymn: *“God of Grace and God of Glory” - Hymn #850*

Postlude

FAITH CUP

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

- ROMANS 5:2 KJV