

# Connect & Reflect

Wednesday, 11/20/19

## SERMON SUMMARY

### Faith Works

James 2:14-26

*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. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead (James 2:14-26, ESV).*

Easy believism. Cheap grace.

It's called by different names, but it's been around for a while, probably since the beginning of time. Some people claim to believe, but they don't live like it.

James apparently had people in his community of faith who made a big deal of their faith, but their lives didn't show it. Some of them were showing favoritism to the rich, while others weren't helping the needy even though they had the means to do it.

To them James wrote very frankly: "Faith apart from works is dead."

James' message is important for every Christian to hear, but perhaps more so for those of us who live in the Bible Belt. It's so easy to refer to ourselves as Christians—to attend church some, give a little, pray sometimes—but actually being a Christian is something different.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### Start Praying

- 1) How can our class pray for you, a friend, or loved one tonight?

### Start Reading (read James 2:14-26)

- 2) What questions come to mind as you read this text? What's one thing that you remember from the sermon?

### Start Thinking

- 3) What issue do you think James is responding to? What may have been going on in the lives of the Christians to whom he wrote?
- 4) James mentions two Old Testament examples: Abraham and Rahab. How do those examples illustrate the importance of faith that expresses itself in deeds?
- 5) In Romans 3:28, Paul wrote, "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." In James 2:24, James wrote, "You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." Is there tension here? How do you "reconcile" these two passages?
- 6) In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Notice Paul's use of "works" and "workmanship . . . good works." How does this help us understand the role of good deeds?

### Start Sharing

- 7) How does living in the Bible Belt influence some people—or even us—to fall into the "Christians in name only" trap? How do we sometimes call ourselves Christians without practicing the deeds associated with that faith?
- 8) How has our fear of legalism caused some people—or even us—to underemphasize the essentiality of faith expressing itself through good deeds?

### Start Doing

- 9) Do we as a church do a good job of caring for fellow Christians' physical needs? If so, then in what other ways might this passage speak to our church? To you? Discuss practical ways that we can live out this teaching.