

Faith That Works Msg 4
Seeing Isn't Believing
Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
Eagle Rock Baptist Church
August 24 & 25, 2019

We're continuing a series we've been in called "Faith That Works" because that's what God wants to grow in us, a faith that works.

Today looking at the fact that . . . **Seeing Isn't Believing**

Real faith - - Genuine Faith – A Faith that Works, involves more than just Seeing What God's Word says

It involves more than just HEARING it taught.

Real faith requires REAL ACTION

It requires that you **DO SOMETHING** based on what you've seen or heard.

This morning we're in James chapter 1 verse 19-27

If you have your Bible or your mobile device let me encourage you to turn there now.

And as you're turning there, let me ask you to imagine a scene

Imagine that you're out running along the Beach, and as you're running you cross paths with

None other than **Arnold Schwarzenegger**

The Arnold Schwarzenegger – The Governator Himself

And you stop and tell him what an honor it is to meet him.

You tell him how you are one of his biggest fans.

You tell him how you've seen every one of his movies

- **Conan the Barbarian**
- **Conan the Destroyer**
- **Terminators 1, 2, 3**
- **Predator**
- **Total recall**
- **Running Man**
- **Kindergarten Cop**
- **Twins**
- **True Lies**

You tell him how you've lived in California your entire life and how you feel like this state has never been governed as well as it was when he was in Sacramento.

He's flattered by your praise, and **he asks you if you'd like a copy of his book.**

Would you like a copy, of course you would!!

You assume he will give you a copy of his best-seller

"The Governator"

But that's actually not the book he has for you

Arnold hands you another book called

How To Have A Body Like Mine

It's a FITNESS BOOK

Apparently this is one of his newer releases and he carries copies of it with him everywhere he goes, just in case he meets someone who doesn't have one..

Well you take the book, you thank him for it, you even have him autograph it.

And you go on your way.

And then you run in to Arnold a month later.

And you tell him, **"I read your book and it was awesome"**

"In fact it was so good that I got a bunch of my friends together"

"I bought copies for all of them"

"And we decided to meet each week to go through the book together."

We did this over breakfast.

We would have a breakfast of Bacon, Eggs, Hash Browns, Waffles, Cinnamon Rolls, French Toast, Biscuits, Gravy and Lard."

And man we love your book

And Arnold asks you, **“Are you doing what the book says?”**

“Are you eating healthy?”

“Are you exercising?”

And you say **“No! That would be way too much work.”**

“But I want you to know I read it, I even picked up the audible version so I can listen to it in my car.”

“I’ve committed sections of your book to memory.”

“And my friends and I are really on fire for your book.”

Now let me ask you - - **“Do you think Arnold would be pleased by your answer?”**

I would think, most likely not.

Because he would not want you to just be a HEARER of his word, he would want you to be a DOER

And that’s what we’re talking about this morning/evening

Hearing and Doing.

James 1:19-27

“Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.” James 1:19-20

“So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.”

James 1:21-22

“For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.”

James 1:23-25

“If you claim to be religious but don’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.” James 1:26-27

Why Is Hearing Without Doing So Dangerous?

Why is hearing God’s Word, without doing what it says, so dangerous?

I wonder how many of us here this morning/evening have an area of our life where we know what God wants us to do, but for whatever reason, we’re just not doing it?

I don’t know what that area might be for you.

It could be in the area of finances.

You know what God’s Word says about TITHING

You know what God’s Word says about DEBT

And for whatever reason you’re not doing what God’s Word says to do.

Maybe it’s in the area of sex outside of marriage, maybe it’s living together, of Anger, or Alcohol .

..

You’ve heard messages on that

You know Bible verses on that

But up to this point you haven’t done what God is telling you to do

Why is hearing without doing so dangerous?

James gives us two reasons.

Number one he says . . .

1. You’re fooling yourself

Right after James says, “Don’t just listen to God’s Word, but do what it says” – he says

“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.” James 1:22-24

Have you ever done that?

He’s like how crazy would that be?

The whole point of a mirror is to show you what needs to be corrected so that you can make the necessary corrections.

James says if you don’t make the corrections you’re fooling yourself. (verse 22)

Some of your versions don’t say you’re **fooling yourself**, they say “**you deceive yourselves.**”

Anybody here have a version that says “deceiving”?

((NIV))

The mention of that word “Deceive” would have caused James hearers to really listen up.

And the reason is that the Bible tells us that as Christians we have a spiritual enemy the most common word in scripture for that enemy is the word “Deceiver”

Our enemy - - - Satan, Lucifer, the Devil is most commonly in scripture called “the deceiver”

And James is telling us that

If I’m not a “doer” of God’s word, but all I do is “hear” I’m not only not partnering with what God wants. . .

I’m actually doing the work of the enemy.

The work that the enemy is trying to do in my life, I’m actually doing it for him . . .

James is saying that when you “Hear” God’s word. . .

But don’t actually “Do” God’s word, you actually deceive yourself you cause yourself to believe something that isn’t true. . .

What would we be causing ourselves to believe that isn’t true?

We’d be causing ourselves to believe that there’s some sort of value in HEARING without

DOING.

I don’t know how many of you use TO-DO lists.

I do.

I start a list at the beginning of each week

I usually have 10-15 items on that list

By the end of the week I might have half of them checked off the list.

For some of us going to church is on our to-do list.

We go to church and we check that item off our list.

James says, “Not so fast”

If you went to church, and you heard God’s Word, but you didn’t Do God’s word, you’re Fooling Yourself.

You’re Deceiving Yourself.

And that’s dangerous.

A second reason it’s dangerous. . . .

And this isn’t really a second reason but just an extension of the first is that . . .

2. Your religion is worthless

You think that there is VALUE in HEARING God’s Word even if you don’t do God’s Word, and you’re wrong.

You’re fooling yourself and your religion is worthless.

Let me share with you

Two Myths About Faith And Works

1. It doesn’t matter what you do as long as you believe

It’s the idea that as a Christian, if you’ve trusted in Jesus Christ, then that’s all that matters.

God really doesn’t care about what you do.

Just so long as you BELIEVE.

One reason that we know that his is a myth is because of what James writes later on in his letter.

In James chapter 2 he writes. . . .

“You believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.” James 2:19

James is telling us there that when it comes to doctrine.

The demons - - - Satan and his minions - - - are completely orthodox.

They're not heretical.

There are monotheistic.

They know that there is one God and they tremble before him.

But that's not saving faith.

If just BELIEVING the right things saved you, then you could expect to see heaven filled with a bunch of demons, you won't.

The first myth about faith and works is

1. It doesn't matter what you do as long as you believe

There's a second myth when it comes to faith and works and that is that . . .

2. It doesn't matter what you

believe as long as you do

Hey, "You call yourself a Christian"

I make no such claim.

But I'm banking on the fact that at the end of my life, when I stand before God, he won't really be concerned about what I believed as long as I lived a life that was filled with good works - - or at least as long as the good outweighed the bad.

Again, we know that's a MYTH because of the words of Jesus.

Speaking about the day when we will all stand before Jesus, he said . . .

"21 'Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.

22 On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' Matthew 7:21-22

I want to pause there for a moment to make sure you notice something.

What I want you to notice is that nowhere in this interchange does Jesus challenge their claims.

He doesn't say. . .

"You're wrong!"

"You didn't prophesy in my name"

"You didn't cast out demons in my name"

"You didn't perform miracles in my name."

He doesn't challenge the truthfulness of their claims, because so far as we know their claims were all true.

The bottom line can be seen in what he says next which is . . .

23 But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

So what is it that God is looking for as he looks at us?

Is it faith or works?

The answer is YES!

These things are not opposite

And perhaps the clearest passage that brings together the relationship is Ephesians 2:8-10

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:8-10

What's the

The Truth About Faith And Works

Good works don't create faith

Good works reveal faith

I don't think I can say it better that Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation said it.

Speaking about the relationship between faith and works he said. . . .

We are saved by faith alone, but

the faith that saves is never alone

Why is this interaction so important.

Why is it so important that we not just BELIEVE God's Word but also DO what it says?

Let me take you back to something that the Word of God shows us in the very beginning about what God's intention was for your life and my life.

In Genesis 1 we have the record of God's creation of the world.

And as part of that process he decided that he would create humans.

Genesis 1:26

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness . . .

So we’re told that God did exactly what he set out to do.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:26-27

From the very beginning God designed human beings . . .

All human beings

You and me and Adam and Eve

Your Uncle Roy

Your Aunt Edna

Were all created “in His image”

“In his likeness”

He did that so that we could reflect His image

So that when others would look at us, they would see Him, alive and living in us.

The reason that God created us in His image is so that we would be like Him.

When sin entered the picture in Genesis chapter 3, that image was tarnished, but it wasn’t destroyed.

And part of God’s reason for sending His son Jesus Christ into this world, and bringing us into relationship with him, was so that, that image could be restored in us.

Romans 8:29 says . . .

“For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son. . .

You might have a translation that says . . .

“He predestined them to be conformed to the image of his Son,

But either way the purpose was the same.

It was so that Jesus

might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” Romans 8:29

This was part of God’s purpose in sending Jesus from heaven to earth.

So that there might be **More People More Like Jesus.**

We were CREATED in the image of God

And when that image was tarnished through the fall, part of God’s purpose in our RE-CREATION – our new birth – was to restore that image.

And when you and I don’t just HEAR God’s Word, but when we actually DO what it says we REPRESENT. . .

Or we **Re-Present** God to others.

One of Jesus 12 disciples, the Apostle John, the one who liked to refer to himself as **“the disciple whom Jesus loved”** talked about it this way in the letter that he wrote.

John says . . .

“No one has ever seen God.

I think most of us would agree with that.

No one has ever seen God God is invisible

But then he adds these words. . .

But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.”
1 John 4:12

The invisible God becomes visible to others, when they look at us and see Him alive and living in us.

If you’ve read through the Gospels . . .

You may remember the time that one of the religious experts of his day tried to trap Jesus with a question. . .

Matthew 22:35 tells us . . .

“One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?’” **Matthew 22:35-36**

Potentially a TOUGH question

This man had studied what we call the Old Testament

He knew that there were 613 positive commands in the O.T. law

This isn’t counting the “Thou Shalt Nots”

According to Jewish tradition the commandments that God gave to Moses numbered 613.

And this man wanted to know

Of all the 613 commandments, which one was the most important?

When it comes to all the commands that God has given us, what matters most?

“Jesus replied, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

In other words, love God with all you’ve got

He says . . .

This is the first and greatest commandment.

Now before I read further I want you to remember something

This religious expert had only asked Jesus for one commandment.

He had asked him ***“Which one is THE MOST IMPORTANT commandment.***

What’s interesting is that Jesus didn’t stop with one, he gave him two

He told Him . . .

A second is equally important:

Some of your versions may say, ***“A second is like it”***

And then Jesus goes on and says

Love your neighbor as yourself. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus said, Do You want to know the most important command”

It’s to “Love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.”

The most important command is to love God with everything that you’ve got.

But then Jesus said . . .

There’s no way to separate what’s going on in your heart, in terms of your love for God with that working itself out in your life in the form of your love for your neighbor.

Jesus, as he shared these words was talking to people who claimed to love God

And Jesus told them, if you really are loving God, then one of the proofs of that will be that you are also loving the people in your lives.

He says you can’t separate these two.

If you’re someone who says ***“I really love God, it’s just people I can’t stand.”***

Jesus wants you to know that you don’t really love God.

Again, going back to the Apostle John and his letter, he said it this way . . .

“If we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?” 1 John 4:20

And of course the implied answer is “we can’t.”

Part of loving God is extending that love to the people in your life.

It sounds like two commandments that Jesus gave, but it’s really just one.

As we begin to love God something in the human heart, something in the human soul, something in the human mind is transformed to the point where we can’t help to love people in the way that He has loved us.

Our job is to receive God’s love . . . and then reflect it to others.

Reflect it to the people in our lives

James says part of that is making sure that **WHEN** you **HEAR** the word of God, you make sure that you’re not just **HEARING** the Word of God but you’re living it out in your life.

If you disconnect **HEARING and DOING** he says that you’re deceiving yourself.

James writes

“But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.” James 1:25

Do you want to live a blessed life?

He says, “Here’s the key”

Look at His Word . . . Do what it says . . . God will bless you.

But on the flip side, he also says . . .

“If you claim to be religious but don’t control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.” James 1:26

That’s the second time he’s used that same term . . .

“You’re fooling yourself”

And the end result is that what you're left with is a

religion that's worthless." James 1:26

James is saying if you want to know whether or not your religion is real, then look at your life.

Does your religion change the way you talk?

Does it change the way you live?

Because if your IMAGE, isn't being transformed by your religion, then it's just possible that your religion is worthless.

You could boil down what James is saying in these verses into this statement.

If our religion doesn't transform our image our religion is worthless.

If our religion doesn't have any effect on the way that people see us. . .

If it doesn't have any effect on the way we talk and act and interact with others

Then we have real reason to question what the value of that religion is.

A good question for you and me to ask ourselves might be what difference does my faith make once I leave this place on (Saturday evening or Sunday morning)?

Once I go out into my M-F live, whatever kind of work I do . . .

Whether I'm a teacher, or a nurse . . .

Whether I work in finance or law enforcement . . .

Whether I'm a stay-at-home mom or a student,

Whether I'm a barrista, or a manager or an engineer, or unemployed . . .

Whatever I do, how is my religion, how is my faith, causing me to approach differently the things that I do, than I would if I didn't hold to that faith that I claim to embrace?

James says that your relationship with God ought to so radically affect and transform your life that you can't help but show it.

Here's the litmus test to figure out whether or not your religion is the real day.

James says . . .

"Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you." James 1:27

In James day, the situation facing orphans and widows was a little different than it is today, at least in this country.

These two groups often found themselves abandoned and homeless.

They were the unwanted and the forgotten in that society.

They had to beg or steal in order to clothe themselves and feed themselves.

James is saying "I want you to go and love people like that . . .

I want you to love people who will never be able to pay you back for the love that you show to them."

Earlier I mentioned to you a time when someone tried to put Jesus to the test, by playing "stump the rabbi" and bringing him a question that they thought he would struggle to answer.

The question about the greatest commandment.

In Mark chapter 12, Mark tells us that someone else in that same crowd asked Jesus another question.

"Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?" Mark 12:14-15

Before answering, Jesus said . . .

"Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.' They brought the coin, and he asked them, 'Whose image is this? And whose inscription?'

And they didn't have to think long before replying . . .

The image on that coin is . . .

'Caesar's" Mark 12:15-16

And Jesus responded to them by saying . . .

"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's

And with those words he answered the question that they had asked about whether or not to pay taxes.

But then Jesus added something on to that.

He said . . .

Give to God what is God's." Mark 12:17

Jesus said, "If Caesar's image is on the coin, then you shouldn't be surprised to hear me tell you, that you should offer that to Caesar."

In a similar way, take a look at your life.

Whose image is on you?

Would the people in your life say "I see Jesus image in you?"

I see you loving others like Jesus loved others.

I see you serving others like Jesus served others.

Remember,

If our religion doesn't transform our image our religion is worthless.

We gather here each week in worship

And as part of that gathering we study God's Word together.

And that's good because that's the starting point for our faith.

God tells us in His word that ***"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."***

If we don't HEAR the word, then how can we respond to it?

How can we OBEY what we haven't heard?

But we make a mistake if we think that's all there is to it.

The evangelist D.L. Moody said it really well when he said . . .

The Bible was not given for our

information but for our

transformation

The end result of our coming into contact with God's Word ought not to be that we're just SMARTER, that we just have more INFORMATION.

The end result ought to be that we are becoming more and more like the one to whom it points.

That we're becoming more like Jesus.

Let's pray together toward that end. . .