

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
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September 25, 2016

James 2:10-17

Pentecost 19. Eisenach Series



¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Surely it is God who saves us – we will trust in God and not be afraid for the LORD is our stronghold – our sure defense. He will be our Savior:

I was at a gas station not far from here – pumping gas into my car – the GOSPEL. At this gas station they sell 40 lb. plastic bags of water softener salt. There are stacks of softener salt between the pumps – with these plastic/cardboard walls around them. These plastic/cardboard boxes were being removed. They were stacked – leaning against the gas pump. It was windy. And

all of a sudden – they started to blow over. Started to blow over onto me! Yikes! I held up my hand to catch one – as it fell toward my head and I caught it! Ouch! The guy hauling away these plastic/cardboard walls ran over and said, “I’m sorry! That’s my fault!” I said, “That’s ok. I forgive you!” Then I showed him my necktie – black and covered with white †s. I said, “I’m in the forgiveness business!” He said, “No offence – but a lot of times that doesn’t make any difference!” I said, “It should!” He said, “But it doesn’t!” Faith shows itself by what we say and especially by how we act – in the real world – in everyday situations. Today God’s Word reminds us and enables us:

Faith Means Fruits Of Faith!

1. Every single sin is serious

2. Jesus’ forgiveness colors everything

Context! We are thinking about part of the Epistle – the Letter of James! James is a name you hear all the time in God’s Word! There is James~like James and John – the sons of Zebedee and his wife named **Salome!** *Probably not!* Jesus had a second disciple named James – KJV – the “Lesser” – today we’d say “the Little” – the son of **Alpheus** and his wife **Mary**. This Mary was an eye witness to Jesus’ crucifixion and his burial and Easter morning – with the women who went to Jesus’ empty tomb. This James? *Again most likely not!* There is another James – the father of the apostle **Thaddeus – or Judas – not Iscariot!** *Again – probably not!*

Then who is he? The first sermon I ever wrote – autumn 1975 was Zacchaeus. The second sermon I ever wrote Winter of 1975 – Jesus is teaching with such passion – His enemies attacked him with such hatred – Jesus’ family – His Mother Mary and his ½ brothers **James, Joseph, Judas and Simon** thought Jesus was having an anxiety attack – having a breakdown! So they went to try and take Jesus away for some mental health rest. Remember?

They told Jesus – “Your mother and your brothers are here to speak with you!” Remember what Jesus said, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers? Those who do the will of my Father in Heaven are my Mother and my brothers and sisters!” That would be us – and so? We are Jesus’ brothers and sisters by grace through faith. So – Jesus’ literal ½ brothers James, Joseph, Judas and Simon! This is the James who wrote this brief letter – about faith in action!

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. It is tempting to think of sins as big mistakes and little mistakes – felonies and misdemeanors. To think of crimes like murder and assault as painfully horrible – while the words some people say when they hit their thumb with a hammer or burn their tongue on some Starbucks or get stung by a bee or the lawnmower won’t start aren’t nearly as bad. It’s easy to think that way – until you realize that what Adam and Eve did – was take one bite of forbidden fruit! If you stumble in just one point – it’s like trying to break just one small hole in a huge pane of glass. Punch one small hole and the whole pane of glass shatters! Envy and covet your neighbor’s “things and stuff” – his house and car and spouse – covet – want what you can’t or shouldn’t have and you have broken the 9th and 10th commandments. Covet his spouse and you have broken the 6th commandment in your ♥. You broke the 1st commandment because you don’t love the LORD your God with all your ♥ and soul and strength and mind. You break the 2nd commandment cursing and swearing that you didn’t do it – and blame somebody else and you broke the 8th commandment – bearing false witness. It ruins coming to church because you have such a bad conscience and you broke the 3rd commandment. You break the 4th commandment – your adultery breaks your parents’ ♥. You steal

\$ to take your mistress out to eat. Finally you break the 5th commandment – murder to cover up your unfaithfulness. And there – you have broken all the commandments! My father always said, “Keep the 1st commandment and the 4th commandments and everything else will fall into place!” And it’s true. Obey your Heavenly Father and obey your earthly Father and everything else will fall into place!

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. To show mercy over judgment – like everything else in the fruits of faith department is impossible – without the Holy Spirit powerful in your ♥! I read in *The Watertown Daily Times* the other day about a man who was convicted of running over a man riding a bicycle. He crashed into him – and killed him. The man ran over the guy riding his bike home from the store – killed him – and didn’t even stop to see if he could help. Oh, did I mention that the driver of the car or truck – had been in a bar drinking – before he killed the guy? How long will the drunk murderer spend in jail? Sentenced to more than 2 years – he will probably end up spending what – less than a year and a 1/2--what with time off for good behavior? Oh, there will be 5 whole years of extended supervision. What is that? The computer will kick it out – if he reoffends? Do you feel compassion? Do you want to show mercy? Probably not – until you stop and are reminded as I was – of people I know and love – that could be out drinking on a Thursday or Friday night – and have a little more than they should – and then crash into somebody on a bike – and would like this guy literally sob in court and literally say “words cannot express the remorse and sorrow I feel!” Mercy triumphs over judgment! Think of what my

sins deserve – and how God is merciful to me. Only in the light of Jesus' forgiving love – can I be merciful to those who sin against me!

¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?" I have said before, "Talk is cheap!" It is! God's Word is important – and so? If God's Word is important – if that's really true – we need to take time/make time to read it – and so? Did you watch the Packers and the Vikings – Sunday night? Did you stay up to the very end? Did we literally spend hour after hour after hour – watching grown men – paid what? Literally thousands and thousands of dollars a minute to play a children's game? And how well did they play? Did they drop the ball? Did they throw the ball just a little bit past the fingertips of their friend? Did they line up in the neutral zone? Did they grab ahold of people – so they couldn't run and catch the ball? We make time for this – but we don't have time to read our Bible? Do we make time to watch the News – crime and terror and corruption and unspeakable evil all around the world – but don't have time to read the Gospel? Do we have time to mow the lawn and text and tweet and play video games until our thumbs fail? Do we have time to post things on *Facebook* that are incredibly silly – but don't have time to study God's Word? Again – if the first person we meet in Heaven is Hosea or Joel or Amos or Obadiah – would we know what to say? Hey – you should meet my Pastor! He's gonna really be excited to meet you?

¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. There are countless

opportunities to put your faith into practice! Cutting donuts in ½ in the entry way! That's a very simple thing to do for Jesus – cutting donuts! Making coffee! That's not very hard to do either. There are directions by the cabinet where they keep the coffee pots and the coffee right next to the pudgy little refrigerator of juice! It's easy to clean up, too! While we are having donut time – it's very good to walk up to someone you don't know and say, "Hey, pretty good donuts, and so? I really like the ones that are twisted – with icing and cinnamon!" Then you can ask them how's it going? If they are having troubles – you can pray for them!

We are getting ready for the *Live Nativity*! We are making plans in September for the first weekend in December – when we will tell everyone in Watertown that Christ the Savior is born! You can be a shepherd – *sore afraid* – then filled with such joy you literally cry out, "Christ the Redeemer is born – to die to wash away all our sins!" You can be an angel and literally sing, "*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!*" You can bake Christmas cookies for the Christ child! You can help take care of the camels! You can ask people, "How are you? Do you have a Church home?" You can help make supper for people after a funeral. You can help make supper for Wednesdays in Advent and Lent! You can help take care of Jesus' flowerbeds. If you see a weed – pull it out! If you see something in the parking lot that doesn't belong there – pick it up and throw it away. If you see something in Church – on the floor that doesn't belong there pick it up! If you see a mark on the floor – one of those black scuff marks – wash it off! If you see something that is wrong make it right! If you have family members – relatives – friends – people you know and love and trust – and they are gradually slipping away from Jesus – hug them and hold them and tell them – "*Jesus loves you!*" I know you

know this! Come and study God's Word with me! Come to worship Jesus with me!

¹⁶ If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. Love your neighbor means help your neighbor – help them in concrete ways! Again – your closest neighbors are the people who share your home. I will never forget – long ago and far away – visiting a man and telling him you have a wonderful home! He said, "No I don't. A home is a place where there is love – love to bring light and warmth. This is not a home. This is a house. It's a house because there is no love here!" How incredibly sad is that?! Houses are made of poured concrete basements – made of lumber and siding and dry wall that covers up wires and pipes and with carpet and paint – with a driveway – a garage sometimes so full of "things and stuff" that there's no room to pull in the cars. Homes? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Moses and Aaron and Joshua lived in tents! Tents that were homes – because of the faith in them – that trusted the Gospel promises of God. God's Word says, **"Husbands love your wife like Christ loved the Church!"** What does this mean? It means husbands put their wives first. It means they protect and defend them. Again, there's nothing wrong with *Hallmark Cards*! But a husband that can set up his 5-gallon pail full of power tools – smack in the battery pack and fix the things that are broken and need repair! We were watching TV the other day – a new program where the wife told the daughter – we need to put the squeeze on the Dad – during the first hour after Church – when he's actually trying to be a better person! If that's what our family thinks – that we are able to put our faith into practice for a scant 60 minutes after we walk out those glass doors – we need to

grow in our faith. We need to come to Lord's Supper – read our Bible – discuss and apply God's Word in Bible Class and then pray more fervently. Then we will – with our life – with our actions say to everyone around us, "Thank you, Jesus!" Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schmitt

