



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, November 1, 2009

“Tithing Our Time” ENOUGH: Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity, Week 2 of 4

James 2:14-18 — *The Word from the Bible (Today’s New International Version)*

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

James 2:14-18 — *The following are excerpts from The Wesley Study Bible.*

For John Wesley, the letter of James was central for Christian faith and life. In his journal, he described James as a remedy against the general temptation of leaving off good works in order to increase faith (Works, June 5, 1741).

What Scripture better exemplifies Wesley’s practicality than the Letter of James? In James, faith is a set of specific practices – engendered in the congregation – that make disciples walk in a different direction than the world’s way. In the contemporary church, being a Christian is often presented as a technique for happiness and prosperity, a helpful way of getting what we want. In James, Christians suffer because they follow Jesus – God’s divine Yes. In much of the church, salvation is something that you believe or feel. In James, salvation is when you talk and walk like Jesus. Though Jesus is mentioned only twice, James exemplifies the communal, congregational, practical consequences when a congregation dares to obey the One who commanded, “Follow me.” In James, worship is what you do inside and outside of church when you do the word.

For many faith and works are two aspects of Christian living that seem to be in opposition to each other. But not for Wesley! For him, faith and good works are united in God’s love. God expresses God’s love for us in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; and we, in turn, express our response to God’s love through our good deeds, particularly toward those in need. Wesley identifies God’s love in action as “words of mercy: and “works of piety.” Works of piety are personal practices that enrich our personal Christian journey, while works of mercy are our systematic practice of loving our neighbor through our deed and through our identification with our neighbor. Faith and works represent the core of the Christian life – a holistic understanding of life addressing both personal and social aspects.

Wesley is famously quoted as writing, “The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness” (Works vol. 12, “Hymns and Sacred Poems,” Preface 5). Religion cannot be limited to an individual, private, inward piety if it is true Christianity. God gifts each believer to serve the body; through God’s grace believers are empowered to love and act hospitably toward one another. For Wesley, holiness is evidenced through acts of mercy, especially toward the poor and needy. Christians should exhibit the kind of community seen in the “acts” church. But, in addition to this understanding of social religion as sharing and meeting material needs, Wesley also maintained that Christians need mutual accountability to spur them onto holiness. He was highly suspect of the individual pursuit of holiness and believed that without loving Christian accountability, the holy life was not attainable.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Here a few prayers to guide you during your time at communion.

Dear Lord, I give you my hands to do Your work; I give You my feet to go Your way; I give You my eyes to see as You see; I give You my tongue to speak Your words; I give You my mind that You may think in me; I give You my spirit that You may pray in me. Above all, I give You my heart that You may love in me – love God and love all humankind. I give You my whole self, Lord, that You may grow in me, so that it is You who lives, works and prays in me. Amen.

For our children and grandchildren:

Lord, I am so glad that you know each of our children and grandchildren by name. I forget sometimes. Thank you for sending a whole hedge of angels around each child. Thank you for protecting them all today. Father, would you please turn their minds and hearts toward You and pleasing you. Thank you!

Almighty God, Once I had such big dreams, so much anticipation of the future. Now no shimmering horizon beckons me: my days are lack-luster I see so little of lasting value in the daily round. Where is your plan for my life? You have told us that without vision, we perish. So, Father in heaven, knowing that I can ask You to deposit in my mind and heart that particular dream, the special vision You have for my life.

Psalm 86 – A prayer of King David

- 1 Hear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.**
 - 2 Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. You are my God; save your servant who trusts in you.**
 - 3 Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long.**
 - 4 Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**
 - 5 You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.**
 - 6 Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.**
 - 7 In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me.**
 - 8 Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.**
 - 9 All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name.**
 - 10 For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.**
 - 11 Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.**
 - 12 I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.**
 - 13 For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave.**
 - 14 The arrogant are attacking me, O God; a band of ruthless men seeks my life—men without regard for you.**
 - 15 But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.**
 - 16 Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant.**
 - 17 Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.**
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Daily Readings

During this series we are looking at passages that address our vow to uphold the church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. These passages speak to the act of ministry and service to others. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, November 2 – Read Acts 1:8. This is the classic imperative of Jesus for the missionary task. We are called to reach out to the city, the county, the country and the world. In what area are you serving today?

Tuesday, November 3 – Read Matthew 28: 19-20. Commonly known as the Great Commission, these last words of Jesus stand as our call to evangelism. We are called to “go” which involves personal investment of time and effort. Where are you investing your time for Jesus this week?

Wednesday, November 4 – Read I Peter 4: 7-11. Peter understands our role as instruments of Christ’s presence in the world. What is our task? Our task is to love and serve others. For all those searching for meaning and significance in their lives, they can look no further than the brothers and sisters who are in need. Meaning comes from “using whatever gift he has received to serve others” (verse 10). What gift have you used this week to serve someone in need?

Thursday, November 5 – Read John 13:1-20. As a symbol of Jesus’ own willingness to serve, Jesus washes the disciple’s feet. They are reluctant at first, but finally all, including Peter, allow Jesus to wash their feet. After Jesus washed their feet he said, “So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Who in your life needs your servant leadership? What does God have for you to do in God’s Kingdom this week?

Friday, November 6 – Read Philippians 4: 4-14. The call to service causes us to reprioritize our lives. Our society puts very high expectations on us and our children - with these expectations comes stress. How can I do more? In this letter Paul reminds us of the great joy of following and serving for Christ. Fulfillment comes from following Christ. Is it time to look at our calendars and schedules to see where God is? Rejoicing is possible through putting Christ first and following God in all things. Finally, this section closes with the words from Philippians 4: 13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Where do you need Christ’s strength this week? Are you willing to “give it up” to Christ?
