

Works James 2:1-10,14-18 16th Sunday after Pentecost Sep. 9, 2018

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. James 2:17-18 works, and note that it isn't called faith and works.

Dear friends in Christ, we kind of skipped to the end, to the big statement at the end. The one that give us a problem. Faith without works is dead. Because that is the part that concerns us. Its the part that people use to say that good works matter in matters of faith.

But lets not start at the end. Lets look at the beginning. Dear brothers. These are not written to unbelievers, not written to people striving to be justified by the law, but to people whom christ shed his blood for, whose sins he died to forgive, who had heard the word and been baptized into his name. This was written to those God had declared righteous in Christ, and who remain righteous in him and in him alone. They believe, they trust. God's saving of them is sure.

And since they believe that Christ died for unworthy sinners, since he is their riches, since they have no other good than him, they can live like that. They can quit living in a way that says they are indebted to wealth or power in this world. They don't need to curry favor with the world; they have all things in Christ. And God's riches to them are for all sinners. So live like it. Don't give more to people you think can help you. Don't put yourself out as better than others whom Christ also died for. Graciously treat all the redeemed as God's children, because God has made them so. God loved them enough to make him part of his family and god lives in you. Let God act in you. This is clear that we can't discriminate on class or job, but honor all as fellow believers in Christ. Wealth doesn't give us greater honor but gives us more opportunities to honor God.

James and other Lutheran teachers tell us to do good works, not just in words but especially in deeds. James asks what good does it to do to tell someone in need be warm and well fed but not to help them. He echoes Jesus, who tells of the sheep who fed him when he was hungry, who clothed him when he was naked. They saw a need in one that God loved and helped.

We should do the same. Faith is the gift of God; salvation is the gift of God; we are not looking to these. Thats why this seron is called works, not works and faith. We have a garbage can in our house and it gets full and stinky. Now we could say its someone else's job to take out the trash or we could it stinks and I don't want to take it out or it is too wet. But that means we live with stinky trash. I care for the people in the family - when it is full I take it out. It isn't about do I get credit or thanks, it isn't about is it my job, it isn't about whose turn, its that the trash needs to go out so we can live in peace. Even if I am going to be gone all day. So it is with God. God doesn't need me to take out the trash, but my family does, so I do it. God doesn't need your clothes or food, but your neighbor does, so be God's sustaining hands and help them. God does not need your good works but your neighbor does so do them.

As lutherans, we often end up looking like we are opposed to good works. But that is because we sinners try to take the credit. We care if God says this is right I theory, and we worry about jobs and time and if it pleases God. That way lies madness, God has given his word. His royal law is love your neighbor as yourself. None of us is right apart from Christ, so don't look to be

right. Look to help. Often, The question to ask is not is this righteous but does it help. When nothing helps where you are, look for another place you can help.

We'll put it another way. You are married when your are pronounce husband and wife. It doesn't matter what you do, you are married. But if you are married, its good to act like it by spending time together, by looking out for the other, by caring. If I stay out all night drinking, yell at my wife, I'm still married. But I am hurting the one I promised to help. I create a conflict between who I am, a husband, and how I act. This should not be.

Now what happens if you look at how to help your neighbor and say, boy, I'm not. I;m not helping my neighbor. I live for myself. Well God has provided for you. Look at his word and see that Christ died for you to forgive your sins. Look at your baptism into his name. See how he still sustains you. Then repent. If you look in the mirror and see the need for God and his salvation, Good. Let it lead you to repentance. And then help those God has put in your life.

Today remeber the God who gave his son for you. Trust in him. Today remember he gave you all thngs. Give your time, energy, money and talent, your whole life, to help your neighbor. And remember that sharing what you have in Christ is the greatest gift God can give the through you.