**Morning Praise @ Home 27th October 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading James 2:14 – 26

### Reflection from John A FAITH THAT WORKS

**Introduction**

Have you ever tried a diet that didn't work? If so, you might sympathize with William the Conqueror who lived almost 1,000 years ago. Apparently, old William got so fat he had trouble staying on his horse!

His solution? The French king decided enough was enough, so he confined himself to his room and consumed nothing but alcohol.

Though the days that followed were undoubtedly interesting, the diet didn't work. He eventually died in 1087 when he fell off his horse at the Siege of Mantes. He was so obese, clergy had trouble fitting him into his stone sarcophagus.

The alcohol diet? Ridiculous. It could never work. A diet is one thing but what matters is how it works out in practice. Similarly having a faith in the Living God has to work out in practice. Our faith needs to shape our lifestyle and make a difference.

But thankfully, there's help. There's a real plan for spiritual health, for a faith that works, and you can find it in the Bible. There's no quick fix, no fad that will instantly take you to a level of mature Christianity, but there is a plan that will work, as long as we put it into action.

James isn't the only writer in the New Testament who championed a faith that works itself out in the practice of living. For all his teaching on grace, and the foundational theology of our salvation by faith alone, Paul was also committed to this idea. In perhaps Paul's most famous passage on salvation by grace alone (and not by "works"), he immediately describes a faith that will, indeed, be hard at work.

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

Just as clearly as Paul said we weren't saved by works, he immediately adds that we are created in Christ to do good works, work that God had long ago planned for us to be about.

PUT SIMPLY A GENUINE LIVING FAITH WORKS OUT IN THE WAY WE LIVE FOR GOD IN OUR DAILY ACTIONS.

Consider the way Jesus made "disciples." He invited people to follow him as students, but only those who actually responded actually experienced discipleship. Peter and Andrew knew that experience, but the rich young ruler and others who walked away did not. Nicodemus slowly came to follow, but most of the other religious experts did not.

The commitment of working at something you believe in isn't difficult to comprehend at all. If you want the job, you'll have to prepare the resume, fill out the application, and shake someone's hand. It might make you nervous to make the first move, but without those action steps, there will be no job.

If you think someone special in your life might make a good spouse, there will be no discovery of that reality without some definitive action steps taken along the way. No matter what your choice of action, without some "work" behind your feelings, there will never be a discovery of what the potential relationship holds … unless that action actually happens.

James was apparently dissatisfied with people who talked the talk but never got around to walking the walk. They had the feelings, but no work!

JAMES 2:20-22 says: You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

**A faith that works will be tested**

James didn't waste any time getting around to this point. From the start with his "Dear Church," greeting barely behind him, he starts teaching. And Lesson No. 1 involves the testing of our faith.

Earlier on in James 1:2-4 it says: Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Many times, new Christians arrive in church ready to experience the best days of their life, just bliss and blessings, while waiting their turn to go to heaven. How quickly their perception changes!

James takes away any pretension that it would be anything except that way. From the earliest days of the church, persecution and trials have been part of God's educational package given to those who've followed. A faith that is tested has the opportunity to grow stronger, to a place where it "works." So, James says, when you see the trouble coming, rejoice! You're about to tap into a faith that works!

**A faith that works will be patient**

James 5:7-9: Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

It took Saul three years of intensive study and reflection to rethink his theology (Galatians 1:15-18). It took the disciples 'men actually travelling with Jesus!' equally as long before they reached maturity. We may live in a world of instant gratification, but there is nothing fast about finding a faith that works. It's slow going. It can be very difficult, and very trying. But in the same way precious metals are slowly refined, purified, re-shaped, formed into expensive jewellery, and finally polished to a perfect shine, we, too, can be refined. While that process is happening, however, we must exercise great patience.

**A faith that works will be worth the effort**

Return with me to the opening passage of James. Take a good look at the reward of one who will be patient, of one who will commit to a faith life despite the testing, of one who will take specific, practical action steps of discovering a faith that works.

Going back to James 1:2-4: he says

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.*

Having a faith that works will see you through the worst times of life, and give greater depth and satisfaction to the best times of life. The Greek word for "maturity," which means "perfect, complete, not lacking in anything," is "teleaos." James uses that word five times in his short letter, indicating that the instructions here are something of a manual on how to grow into maturity as a believer.

It may be difficult to get there 'just as it may be difficult to achieve any worthwhile goal in life' but the end result is worth every part of the struggle.

Spiritual growth begins when we move beyond the futile attempts to grow passively and start actively engaging our faith. Howard Hendricks puts it this way: "There is no such thing as a correspondence course for swimming."

Or as James would phrase it, a faith that works . . . will get to work. Be patient through the trials, and stay the course. In the end, the results will be more valuable than any other possession on earth. **Amen**

### Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Everlasting God, we thank you that your written Word continues to inspire us, showing us who you are, how you love us, how we should live and what we can be.

**We pray for eyes to see the beauty and wonder of God’s creation and for a commitment to care for our earth and all its creatures.**

In silence we bring to you our concerns and the concerns of those dear to us.

We call on you today to hear the prayers of those that are afflicted, in need or oppressed. We ask that you hear our prayers for the vulnerable members of our society, that they may find support and care. We ask that individuals and families struggling to deal with financial challenges may find help and aid.

We pray that young people and teachers on a midterm break may be refreshed.

We pray for the world’s nations and their leaders that the living word of God may cut through all concerns other than concern for the welfare of all peoples. We pray for the places in this world torn apart by war and terrorism. Especially we pray for the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, and the many nations, including our own, where there is suffering.

**We pray for the people of the United States that, at this time, they be guided by the Holy Spirit and that their vote will bring them good government, respect and unity of purpose for the betterment of all its citizens.**

We pray for all who have lost loved ones either recently or at this time of year and ask you to provide your peace and comfort during their time of grief. We thank you for your promise of eternal life for all who put their trust in your son Jesus.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**