

**September 10, 2006**  
**Year B, Proper 18**  
**St. Michael Lutheran Church**  
**Rev. John Wertz, Jr.**  
**James 2:1-17; Mark 7:24-37**

My son, Parker, loves cars

- Rarely do you see Parker outside of school
  - that he doesn't have a Hot Wheels car in each hand
- He loves his Hot Wheels.
  - He loves books about cars.
    - He loves movies about cars.
- So it didn't entirely surprise me the other day
  - when we were driving home from school
    - and Parker announced that he was now ready to start driving.
- Now Parker knows me well enough
  - that he knew he had to give me a pretty good set of reasons
    - if I was going to let him drive
- and so
  - he quickly said -
    - I've watched lots of movies about diving cars.
      - I've read books about driving cars.
        - I've watched you drive the car.
          - I think I'm ready!
- Now much to Parker's disappointment
  - I told him
    - that neither I

- or the state of Virginia
  - would be ready for him to drive for a number of years,
- but in his mind
  - Parker knew everything he needed to know about cars and driving
    - and that meant he would be able to drive
  - he equated knowing about cars
    - with actually driving
- but as we all realize
  - knowing about something
    - and doing something are two different things.
- And it's this difference between knowing and acting
  - that I think James is trying to get across to us
    - when he says
      - “Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” (*James 2:17*)
- James wants us to be clear that
  - having faith in Jesus Christ
    - means allowing that faith to shape and guide the way we live our life
  - having faith in Jesus Christ
    - means living in a way that makes Christ known to the world
  - having faith in Jesus Christ
    - means responding to God's love and care for us
      - by showing love and care to others
- That's what James is talking about
  - when he asks

“My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism

- really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?” (*James 2:1*)

- James just can't see how

- you could believe in Jesus

- and yet not treat all God's people equally

- James wants your belief, your faith

- to manifest itself in your daily life.

- For James, there is no such thing

- as a one day a week Christian

- you are either a Christian for 7 days a week

- and 24 hours a day

- or you have misunderstood what it means

- to follow Jesus

- Now, please be clear - -

- James doesn't expect us to be perfect,

- none of us is perfect

- sin is a part of the world

- there will be days and times

- when we won't be a beacon of God's love in the world

- but don't think that God will abandon you

- or somehow take away the gift of love, grace and salvation

- that comes to us in Christ Jesus

- just because you have a bad day

- or a sinful moment

- We all have those days
  - we all have those moments
    - when what we do and what we should do
      - are two different things -
- that's why we start our worship with a time of confession and forgiveness
  - we aren't perfect
    - and God loves us anyway
- No - what James is talking about
  - is responding in visible ways
    - to God's love in your life -
- that's what Jesus does in our reading this morning from Mark
  - a man comes to him who is deaf
    - and has a speech impediment
      - and Jesus has compassion for the man
        - takes him aside
          - and heals him
- Jesus doesn't look at the man and say
  - God loves you
    - Believe in me
      - and you will have eternal life.
        - and then quickly go on his way leaving the man in need
- No,
  - Jesus takes the man aside and addresses his hurts and needs in this life
    - Jesus uses the gift of healing that he has

- to open the man's ears to hear
    - and in the process
      - I can guarantee you
        - Jesus also open the man's heart to hear
  - to hear the wonderful good news
    - God loves you
      - Believe in me
        - and you will have eternal life.
- James calls us
- to follow Jesus' example
    - to provide assistance to people in need
      - to address people's hurts and hopes
        - so that they might know God's love in their lives
- that's what I think James means when he says
- “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?” (*James 2:14-15*)
- James wants us to say
- I believe God loves me.
    - I believe that God has sent Jesus to save and help me.
      - and in response to that love and help

- I'm going to love and help others.

You see,

- from James' perspective

- Having faith connects us to the salvation that comes to us

- as a free gift from God

- But having faith

- doesn't feed the person who is hungry - -

- unless

- that faith spurs you to action in the world

- or to put it in terms that Parker would like

- faith is like the key that

- starts the car

- without the keys to the car

- it's just a big hunk of metal and plastic

- the keys

- turn metal and plastic

- into something active in the world

- hopefully that's what faith does for us

- hopefully our faith starts us down the path of life reaching out to help and serve

- as God's people in the world.

- And while each of our experiences will be different

- each of us will have different opportunities

- to show the love of Christ in the world around us

- each of us has been blessed with different gifts

- that allow us to serve and help others
- each of us has a unique experience of God's love in our lives
  - that allows us to reach out to others in a very personal way
- Each of us
  - is,
    - as Bishop Mauney likes to say,
      - an ambassador for Christ in the world

As I said a few moments ago

- Parker's love for cars
  - works its way into every part of his life
    - and if you spend any time around him
      - whether you are a long-time friend
        - or the young woman he met at a VT soccer game
          - you will quickly learn of Parker's love of cars
- My prayer for us as people of God
  - is that our faith
    - will permeate our lives
      - so thoroughly
        - that our words,
          - and our lives
            - will reveal for all the world to see
              - the love that God shows us - -
                - the impact that God's love
                  - has made on our lives

- and the difference God's love
- can make in the world.