**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes From July 3, 2022**

**Do Not Be Hearers Only – James 1:19-27**

This past summer my family was blessed to go to Hershey Park for a daytrip. Not only that, but we were blessed to go with free tickets, because of the kindness of Sister Deb Bell here at Chestnut Grove. Thank you Deb for thinking of us and for all that they do in serving both Hershey Park as well as your church. You are a blessing and you are loved.

At Hershey Park, one ride that most of our family enjoys going on, especially our daughter Leah loves going on, is a roller coaster called Laff Trakk. How many of you have ridden this ride before?

If you’re not familiar, this Laff Trakk ride is an indoor roller coaster. And this is kind of nice on very hot days or wet and rainy days, as it gets you out of those conditions for a little bit.

Now one thing that is interesting about this ride is that as you get closer to the front of the line, you enter a room that has a bunch of mirrors. And these mirrors always make us laugh. And we’re not the only ones. We see others laughing and smiling as well. Hence, the name Laff Trakk, I suppose.

But why we are laughing? It’s because these mirrors are doing something that perhaps you’ve seen at carnivals. Each of these mirrors presents a distorted reflection of the person looking at it. Sometimes the mirror makes you look very tall and thin. Or the mirror makes you appear rather short and stocky. Or it makes your feet look like they are extremely big, although this one isn’t too startling for me, as I’m used to having rather large feet. May I digress.

What makes the mirrors so funny is that the person looking in the mirror knows that they really don’t look like that. They know that that’s not accurate. That it’s a distortion. It’s a false picture of themselves. It is funny because they haven’t forgotten what they actually look like and they know that the mirrors are not a true depiction of their reflection.

But you know what, like many things we encounter in the physical, there are spiritual truths that are connected or related to them. Such is the case in regards to mirrors. The concept of mirrors was a familiar one to the biblical writers.

Even though our modern-day mirrors were not invented until the 1800’s, mirrors have been around, in one form or another for a very long time. Typically, these ancient mirrors were made by various polished metals. In fact, these ancient mirrors existed for several thousand years. And mirrors are mentioned in several books of the Bible, including Exodus, Isaiah, Proverbs, and 2 Corinthians, as well as today’s passage from the book of James.

Mirrors remind us that God expects people to know what they look like --- not only physically, but especially spiritually. Seeing ourselves accurately is so important.

So this morning, as we continue unpacking James’ powerful letter to the early church, we find James referencing a mirror in connection to how Christians are called to live godly lives in this world.

Please turn with me to James 1:19-27... **19My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. 21Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.**

**22Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.**

**26Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**

Friends, what is James getting at in this passage when it comes to mirrors? James states, **23Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.**

We know that something is not healthy when someone immediately forgets something, especially something as important as what they look like. And James compares this to people who listen to God’s Word, but do not do what it says.

James is telling his readers that something is wrong if people are listening to the life-giving words of Scripture, but are refusing to put them into practice.

James knew firsthand, from his own experience, the power the transformation that Jesus Christ can give. James himself, if you recall, did not follow Jesus until after he saw the Lord risen from the dead. James was a life transformed. Was James perfect from that point on? I’m sure he was not. I’m sure that he saw himself as a work in progress, so to speak.

But James knew what he looked like, spiritually because of Jesus. Jesus had saved him. Jesus had cleansed him from his sin and had made him a new creation. The Spirit of Christ was living in James and James was choosing to live each day for Christ. And James wanted his readers to remember that they have been changed by the power of the gospel. Christ has made them into saints. Christ has set them apart to live holy lives committed to Him. Christ has called them to service in His kingdom.

In this passage, James called the church to be doers of God’s Word. Doers of the Word; see themselves as no longer their own, but as Christ’s. They do not stop with hearing or reading God’s Word, they seek to put it into practice.

James gives a few practical examples on what the church is called to. One of those examples is regarding speech. Christ’s followers are to speak differently than those that do not follow Christ.

The way of the world is to be quick to speak, quick to judge, and quick to become angry. But the church is to be becoming more and more like Jesus. The church is to be slow to speak, quick to listen, slow to become angry – like our Lord Himself is.

James is telling the early church that being slow to speak and quick to listen and slow to become angry is who they are now because of Jesus. And so they need to live that out.

If they find themselves not being very good listeners and being quick to raise their voice, they are forgetting who they are in Christ. And not only that, they would be setting a poor example for the world when they claim to follow Christ but are not doing what He tells them.

James also tells the church that they are to get rid of all moral filth. There is a lot of moral filth out there. It is so easy for Christians to give a place for these things in their lives. But when they do, they are forgetting what they look like.

I remember I used to watch movies that many Christians today would not think are that bad. But now I can’t watch them. I’m too convicted. For example, I used to think Dumb and Dumber was funny. But now I see it as just filled with carnal humor followed by more carnal humor. I can’t put that in my soul.

Even though there were not movies in the first century, there would have certainly been many ways that Christians then could have chosen to live with moral filth in their lives. James essentially says “No. Brothers and sisters, you are called to live a morally pure life. That’s who you are in Jesus Christ. That is who you are because of the word of truth that you believed.”

And finally, James highlights the importance of reaching out to those in need and those that are especially struggling in some way. He speaks of orphans and widows in their distress as examples of believers that seem more likely to be experiencing these circumstances. But I think that we can all relate to going through times of distress.

James knew that life is hard. And he knew that the church is called to be active in caring for those who are struggling. Life was hard in the 1st century, and it can be difficult today as well, can’t it?

By doing these things, by putting God’s Word into practices in these and in other ways, the early Christians would be able to better remember who they are spiritually in the mirror. It will help them to not forget.

So friends, as we think about this passage and its relevance for our lives today, what are we to take from it? And I think that it is simply this. Do not forget what you look like. As people who have responded to the good news of Jesus with repentance and submitting to Him, you have been made a new creation. You are a saint. You are a son or a daughter of the King of Kings. You are part of the family of God.

How can we help ourselves not forget what we look like spiritually? It is by not only being a hearer of the word, but a doer as well. Living for Jesus will impact everything that we do. We are not to live to build up our own ego. We are not to be short tempered or quick to speak. Instead, we are to be good listeners and we are to be slow to become angry.

We are to seek to actively bless and help and support those that are struggling among us and around us. As we do these things, we are showing people Jesus.

We are to not make a place for any moral filth in our lives. These are some of the ways that we do not forget who we are in Jesus Christ.

So friends, whether or not you ever find yourselves in line waiting to ride *Laff Trakk* and are seeing all those distorted mirrors or not, whenever you look into a mirror please do not only remember what you look like physically, but that as a follower of Jesus Christ, remember that you are a new creation by His amazing grace and that every day, every moment, you have an opportunity to show people Jesus by doing what He teaches.

On this 4th of July weekend, we must remember that there is no freedom greater than the freedom that Jesus gives us. So as we celebrate the freedoms that we have in America, let us celebrate all the more that Christ has set us free from the bondage to sin, that we might reflect Jesus to the world more every day. Amen.

Resources:

The Letter of James: Douglas J. Moo

Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament by Craig L. Blomberg & Mariam J. Kamell

<https://jewishcurrents.org/mirrors-in-the-bible-and-in-jewish-tradition>

<https://aleteia.org/2019/03/28/mirrors-and-the-bible-reflecting-on-the-human-experience/>

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)