

1/5/20 - James 1:19-27 - "Hearers and Doers" (Vision Sunday)

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[0 : 00] So it is the first Sunday of 2020. How about that? New Year's resolutions have started. Some have already failed, if you want to be honest.

But it is an honor and a privilege to be gathered with you today again. Man, I'm just so blessed. Every Sunday, being here gathered with you is such a blessing. I love every one of you so much, and I care for you, and we do many, go many leaps and bounds for each and every one of you here in this church. You are definitely my beloved brothers and sisters.

And today, we're going to be navigating through a portion of the book of James, a certain passage, which is close to the heart of this church and reaches into the depths of the foundation of our convictions as a church.

And the book of James is known as the Proverbs of the New Testament, and specifically addresses the aspect of Christian maturity all throughout the book.

James gets into the passage today, where we'll be as verse, chapter 1, verse 19 through 27, and he speaks about the relationship of hearing and doing, being in a direct relationship with maturity.

James also forecasts the rest of the book based upon the thesis statement that we'll read in verse 26 and 27, which is going to pick out the very same themes that continue throughout the rest of the book. So, spoiler alert, looking forward to chapter 2 through 5, James expounds on that thesis statement in verse 26 and 27. So, the themes that are in that are going to be expounded on, like controlling the tongue, caring for the less fortunate, and becoming like the—and not becoming like the world, and all which reflects the level of maturity in the Christian life.

[1 : 59] But why would James write this book? Why? Obviously, you got the Trump statement, well, because he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Okay, well done. It's like saying Jesus for all the answers in Sunday school. But why specifically did James write this book? Because obviously, he was encouraging Christians towards maturity. And this would imply that either there's two sets of Christians possibly in this church, based on the context of the book, possibly the ones that think that they have arrived, that they don't need to do certain things, that they can just go through the motions, and they don't have to do anything. Or you got the people who maybe are more slothful, or lazy in their Christian lives, and in their walks. This was definitely the problem which James addresses. There's a problem of slothfulness within the book of James, division, controlling the tongue, a lot of compromise, and a compromise of love. So, I want us to come under the word today and allow us to all look in the mirror today and ask if maybe we have got to a place where we feel like we've arrived at a superior level, that we might be too good for one another, maybe various things that we're doing in this church. Or maybe we have become slothful as we work out our salvation.

So, in light of the text today, how might we be doing in this? Maybe it's time to check ourselves by the standard of scripture. So, let's focus upon our hearts, our own hearts this morning, and be changed.

Let's pray. Father, we come to you today asking you to help us in your word to navigate the pages. Father, we pray that every word and every syllable that comes off of my tongue this morning is love, that it is rooted in care and adoration, nurturing and nourishing of this church.

And Father, we pray that by the Holy Spirit, you empower me to communicate effectively, and for the hearts of this church to receive effectively the word that you have today.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's read James 19 through 27. It says in verse 19, Know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

[4 : 33] For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he is like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

If anyone thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself when staying from the world.

The first point I want to cover this morning is in verse 19 through 21. It's a little chilly in here, do you think? Chilly. No?

[5 : 50] I'm not going to go there this morning. We're not going to vote on that. We might be divided and going into a book that's trying to solve the division. It's perfect in here.

So point one this morning is becoming mature. In verse 19 through 21, it says, Know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Okay, James. Obviously, you care about these people that you're writing to. Of whom you're writing to, my beloved, which is a biblical term of endearment.

Whenever somebody addresses one another in beloved, you know that that is no ordinary relationship. That is a very special, nurturing relationship that that other person has for one another. And he cares enough for them to make them think and evaluate their lives. Let every person, it says. Every person. No one is exempt from doing this.

[6 : 55] Let every person. Number one, be quick to hear. What does that mean? It's also known as listening. But I want to ask you a question, kind of on the flip side of that. If he's asking people to be quick to hear, why were they slow to hear?

Like us, we can sometimes care little about hearing the other person, other perspectives, other opinions and things like that. We just get disgusted with one another once in a while if we want to be honest.

So maybe they were slow to hear because of pride. Maybe they were slow to hear because they were stuck in their way and they became jaded. Maybe they were slow to hear other people in their church.

Maybe because they just didn't care to hear at all. To insiders and outsiders. It says to be slow to speak. But again, let's flip that around. Why might they be quick to speak?

Because I think we can all relate to being quick to speak. We're notorious sometimes for having to put our foot in our mouth and just be quiet. So maybe instead of taking a walk when they're a little bit angry, they're prone to react and respond immediately, being quick to speak.

[8 : 07] Maybe they're quick to speak because they're not counting others in empathy or charity. They're not seeing another perspective other than their own. Consider Proverbs 17.

A fool could be considered intelligent if they hold their tongue when they should. It says in Proverbs 17.28, Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise. When he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

Think about that. This verse also says to be slow to anger. Again, flip that around. Why might they be quick to anger? Maybe they were quick to anger because of lack of empathy for one another. Maybe they were quick to anger because of false assumptions, maybe false perceptions of truth or reality. Maybe they were easily offended. Maybe they were irrationally offended with one another. I like Ephesians 4.25-31. It unites speech with anger. It says, Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with his neighbor.

[9 : 13] For we are all members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Verse 29 continues, Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, and it may give peace to those who hear.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. With all these possibilities of why they were, why James had to say, be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, it's quite a road that he's leading the church down, isn't it?

Because we read that, as we open up the book of James, I've read it enough to know that all of these are possibilities that were going on within this specific church. There was hostility.

[10:30] There was hostile, hostile, dividing people. There were also those who were idle, in all of which exposes not the righteousness of God, as verse 20 speaks on, it reveals the righteousness of man.

When man is concerned about their own perspectives, of only hearing what they want to hear, only speaking what they want to speak, and being angry whenever they want to be angry, because what they feel is a valid cause.

James then instructs his audience what to do with the righteousness of man, as he continues in verse 21. It continues, Therefore, after doing all this stuff, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your soul.

Within a single verse, we have a culmination of both action and labor, and of reception. It says, put away. That's where the action and the laboring on our parts, on the church's part, comes.

Once we identify hints of our own self, in the previous categories, of being quick to speak, being quick to anger, we must redirect that action away from others, and turn it back upon us, because we are all sinners, that are saved by grace.

[11:55] We have to look at ourselves in the mirror, and evaluate, get a perspective, and turn the tables back upon ourselves, before we're ever turning it on others. It's easy to see, and to point out the filthiness and rampant wickedness of others, isn't it?

Isn't it? Isn't it? And in so doing, we're like completely missing our own faults in the entire matter. We are expert critics of one another.

We are. Look at the Garden of Eden. You know, when the Lord addressed Adam, He says, this woman you gave me, you know, she's the problem. And then the woman says, the serpent's the problem.

Well, yeah, while all of that might be true, you're all sinners, and fall short of the glory of God, in this New Testament church. I like how Matthew 7, 3, 5 says, why do you see the speck, that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log, that is in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when there is the log, in your own eye? You hypocrite. First take the log, out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly, to take the speck, out of your brother's eye.

[13:09] When we realize, that we are responding, in the righteousness of man, and not the righteousness of God, and being quick to action, quick to speak, and not slow to speak, slow to anger, we must repent of this, church.

And furthermore, as we put away, as we're doing that action and labor, putting away all bitterness, putting away all that malice, all that filthiness, rampant wickedness, as the verse says, we must also receive something, when we're putting away, it's not good enough, to just put away, and not replace that with something, and that is the word of God, the labor is then in the gift giver, all that is within the word of God, that we receive, has already been labored on the cross, and it brings to us forgiveness, put away, but receive.

Why would James stress this church? Because instead of carrying out justice, on your own whim, the word of God actually encourages us, to be meek, to trust in the Lord, for him to work all things out, according to his good, perfect will.

Remember, we are all sinners, so we must forgive one another, we must count others, in higher honor, we must outdo each other in honor, as scripture says. The implanted word can save us, and not salvifically, but from a lot of trouble, in this passage.

The implanted word can save us, from a lot of trouble, from the power of sin in our lives, as we live according to scripture's demands, and not our fleshly demands, yielding to the word, and not to our flesh.

[14:49] Second point this morning, starts in verse 22, it's being hearers and doers. The verse continues, this passage continues, but be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving

yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently, at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, and goes away, and at once forgets what he is like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer, but forgets, but, but for, who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

This verse really hits home with this church, doesn't it? You've heard it time and time again, probably a broken record, but it hits home. It's the very vision of this church, to hear and to do. James brings to the table a contrary way of living the Christian life, with the word but. He says, but, instead of doing all that, you know, we're putting away, instead, do this, but be doers of the word.

[16:01] The Greek word here is *genomai*, and it draws the importance of process, of maturity. Not necessarily of a one and done occurrence, but a process of maturity, that we are tapping into together, as a church.

It doesn't happen automatically, after a sermon. It doesn't happen automatically, after a Bible study, or receiving any degree, or reading a groundbreaking book, that changes your life.

It still is a process. Maturity is a process, church. So each time we do, what God calls us to do, through his word, we tap into this process of maturity.

Notice too, that James uses the nouns in this passage, of doers and hearers. These are not verbs, these are nouns. Because this church, was to be, what they do.

It wasn't just something that they did. It was who they were. They were doers, and they were hearers. That is ingrained within their DNA. It is within their souls. It stresses the importance of who they are, not something that they just did.

[17:10] And I love the illustration in verse 23. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his face in a mirror.

For he looks at himself, and goes away, and at once forgets what he is like. Now they say the best illustrations, are actually found in scripture. And what we have here, is a great illustration.

James gives to his audience, basically saying, if all you do is hear, and hear, and hear, and you don't respond, and your life doesn't expose the hope that you've been receiving, you're like a man who intently looks in the mirror at his face.

He knows every blemish, he knows every wrinkle, he knows every little, whatever, you know, every little piece of hair on his face. And then upon leaving that mirror, and looking at it intently, leaving that mirror, walking out the door, he forgets what he looks like.

Spiritual amnesia. The holy scriptures are deep, and multi-dimensional. And this book shows us, not just who we are, but also, who we are supposed to be.

[18:23] When we put this book down, James provides a solution. He says, but, in this passage, in verse 25, but the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer, who forgets, but a doer, who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

How many of us may be prone to spiritual amnesia at various times in our lives, of just forgetting that which what we hear?

this might be for those who are faithful in church attendance, or faithful to Bible studies, and then, you know, gathering as scripture commands us to gather, but then upon, like, leaving, 24 hours after leaving church, 24 hours after leaving that Bible study, or small group, it's like, what did we just learn?

You have fits of rage, you have doubts, you go home, and it's a spiritual warfare. We suffer from spiritual amnesia more often than I think we like to admit.

So I want to look at this, and I want to preface it with you guys as my beloved brothers and sisters, because while all this is happening, while, well, there is a reality of being hearers, and hearers, and hearers, and, and almost like saying, like, hello, this light bulb has to go off sometime.

[19:50] How many of us might have a problem here? Maybe not with being doers, but, but actually being hearers. Like, we might be lucky to attend a Bible study maybe once in, like, a decade?

Or maybe attending, maybe if we, if we attend Sunday mornings maybe twice, we call that a win in the month? No, that's not saying that we can't be out of town, we can't have work interfering with our schedules, this is, this is something that you must reflect upon in your own hearts of, is your schedule actually not allowing you, or are you being lazy to gather?

And this is not for everyone because we have a lot of faithful church members at this church and that I love and I adore, I care so much for, and I care so much for the ones that's, that are missing out as well.

But you have to be present to hear, church. You have to be present to hear. gathering on Sundays is vital to be aligned with the mission of God and tested and being involved in a community inside and outside of the church.

Sunday mornings is the setting where true maturity takes place. Think about it. When you're in community with one another, who this community knows the standards of which you are supposed to be living in your life, it's like that closeness of a spouse.

[21 : 14] Sin has no place. And we are together to encourage one another, not just on Sundays, but Bible studies, small groups, everything is to plug us into this maturity process to hear.

And yes, you should expect Sundays to be the most oddly hardest day to get out of bed in the morning. You should expect that church. You should expect your kids to be jumping around off the fan and trying to keep you out of getting ready for church.

You should expect absolute chaos because the enemy has been trying to keep you away from the gathering of the local body and he will do whatever he takes. He will poke and prod at your little buttons that you have that make you be quick to anger and quick to action.

You should expect Sunday mornings to be a battle. And no, the enemy did not make you hit the snooze button. I'm sorry. Did not. But you should expect a battle on Sundays.

You should expect battles when you go to pray. The enemy doesn't want you to pray. He's going to put all these to-do lists on your mind and in your mind of what you need to do rather than pray.

[22 : 32] This goes not only for gathering as a local congregation, but if we are to be hearers and doers, we have to hear. And you have to be present to hear, church. So looking back at James, we all want to be mature.

I think that is honestly a goal and something that we can all pin as an ongoing resolution. We want to be mature as Christians. But we don't want to embark in the process of maturity because maturity is often doing something that God commands even when we least desire to do it.

That's true maturity. This is receiving the word with meekness, church. So let's get this right. And in the words of James, be blessed in our doing as the last verse talks about.

In verse 25, he will be blessed in his doing. Consider Psalm 19, verse 7. The law of the Lord is perfect and refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. Hearing the gospel is the road map to maturity. So that is also being present.

[23 : 43] Notice something vital here. Those who do the word will be blessed in what they do. Hearing is vital to the sinners and saints alike. Hearing comes, faith comes by what? Hearing.

And hearing what? Not a motivational speech on Sunday morning. Hearing the word of God. Hearing. And the last point.

Point three. Maturity in action. As verse 26 and 27 goes. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows and their affliction and to keep oneself abstained from the world. world. Interesting.

Right? Who needs religion? Isn't that some Old Testament stuff? Forget that. Garbage. Religion. There's actually a video out there that I hope none of you share.

[24 : 47] It says, why I hate religion. I see it pop up on Facebook maybe once in a whole year. Because at face value it seems like it communicates some good points.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's good, good, good. But under the service there's actually a huge error of legalism. If you know what I'm talking about the video, the author of the video has actually kind of recanted his statements in the video and considered taking it down and making a response video because he realized that what his Christian brothers were bringing up to him he was actually in error in the video and he admitted that and so he hasn't created a response video but it is popular out there.

But who needs religion, right? Right? Right? Right? Right? Right? Right? Religion does get a bad rap in these days. It really does. James defines religion in this passage though in light of how it is to be intended to be carried out.

So church, look, religion is actually good. Religion is actually good because we are doing God's word. We are actually doing religion.

When we do God's word we're actually doing religion. Think about it. James defines religion as controlling the tongue in verse 26. Looking after the orphans and the widows, all those who are cast out.

[26 : 05] Remaining unstained by the world in verse 27. And all three of these themes are signs and markers of maturity of a Christian and also drive the context of which the whole book of James rests upon.

The book of James is about maturity and how religion plays a vital role in maturity. So I hope to do a series in James but for now let's talk about what this means today and what it means to us about hearing and doing.

Because here at Youngstown Metro Church we are an intentional church family devoted to the hearing of God's word and the doing of God's word. How many of you have not heard that?

Raise your hand. Okay. We're doing well. We are an intentional church family devoted to the hearing of God's word and the doing of God's word.

This is our vision statement which is rooted in what the Bible reveals as maturity and true religion hearing and doing. Our aim is to respond appropriately to the word of God as it's preached.

[27 : 14] All 120 of us that we have in our role must be present to hear. Look around. Do you see 120 with us? No. Hebrews 10 23 says let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

For he who promised is faithful and let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works not neglecting to meet together as it is habit for some but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

So I charge you church as we're going into a new year to obey scripture by not neglecting to gather and seeing the great encouragement waiting for you in this year to bear arms against slothfulness against the battles on Sunday morning and the temptation to double to double book Sunday mornings to say well we can justify not going to church because we have XYZ.

you know honestly church what we start at 1030 we're done by 12 you're talking about two and a half hours really you have to do something within those two and a half hours or making alternative plans that we'd rather entertain instead of Bible studies or small groups this year or maybe when we hit the road you know here goes Youngstown Metro all two of them there they go see when we do outreach events make time for those things make this a serious commitment this year let's hear and do Hebrews 10 this year and watch what hearing consistent biblical exposition and living in consistent community will do not only for your soul but but for those the Lord wants us to witness to by way of our community not everyone may know but it's almost been a year ago it's hard it's crazy to think about but it's been a year ago about it almost that I've been called to pastor this church and quite a battle this was for me to step into this role

I literally got to the point of not a lot of people know this so I literally got to the point where I'm like Lord let this pass for me because I'm like I'm looking at I've been at this church since 2016 I knew issues and I knew things that would have to be addressed and I saw what was wrong in some areas and I was actually rebuked from the Lord and he pushed that cup further in my lap as I get to work I knew what it would entail and I tried to hide but literally God found me there's funny stories I could tell you all these stories previously leading up to 2018 being installed as pastor I tried to be on the computer I tried to be on the soundboard I tried to be out of coffee I tried to be downstairs in the children I was trying to stay away from the stage I was trying to hide so once that cup was pushed into my lap I prayed for vision Lord you care about this church you care about these people what do you want in this church what do you desire out of this church and

[30 : 35] Acts 2 42 through 47 actually came to my head and I believe the Lord spoke to me through his word which he wants this bride this church those who are here and those who aren't here that might be at home tuning in to the live stream what he wants this church to look like as I Brent Beck present each one of you to the Lord and account for each one of you as Hebrews 13 17 says that one day I will what he wants this to look like let's look at Acts 2 42 it says and they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers and awe came upon every soul and many signs and wonders were being done through the apostles and all who believed were together and all had things in common and they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as they needed and day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes they received their food with

glad and generous hearts praising God and having favor with all the people and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved this early church was an assembled family that did life together they were devoted to the hearing of God's word the teaching of the apostles that early church responded to God's word by being consistent in fellowship spending intentional time breaking bread and praying together that early church was a testimony to outsiders because when people looked in on their church in on that community they saw unity they saw love they saw charitability towards one another and also to those outside they attended the temple together but also they saw the importance of their intentionality outside the temple as they broke bread in their homes with one another that church was revealed glad and generous hearts that early church grew because people saw how they loved hearers and doers the Lord blessed their church in this passage and that early church was not of their own they were his church and so it is for us you've heard it again we are his church we are not of our own and they were stewards of each other and they were stewards of God's glory on earth because of how they did their Christian lives united and together they knew it but do we know this for us so speaking of the vision of 2020 it's not really anything special I feel like it's just obeying scripture I pray that we continue because the Lord has done such a mighty work in this church he really has the DNA of this very church that we all sit in and we are present in right now has completely shifted very swiftly and it is very clear to outsiders because many of the people new faces over this past year that you see have testified that they have never experienced a church that loved quite like we love and we let the Bible drive all that the message speaks on these are literal quotes from people who are coming into our community so let's continue this but we have things to focus on this year in addition to what we're already doing really well the first thing I want us to focus on this year is we need to pray more we need to pray more we do this well but what

I'm specifically talking about is prayer teams designed to pray throughout the week for various needs but also in addition to that because we already do that kind of right now we're starting it back up we're getting better but also praying behind the scenes while church is going on having designated people somewhere in the church maybe upstairs or back here praying for our church service praying for people to hear the gospel and receive it having designated prayer teams during small groups while small groups are going on we know that Mary and Sue are out at their house praying for that small group when there's a Bible study going on having a prayer team designated for that Bible study we need God more than we can ever imagine church and by neglecting prayer in our doing as we do reduces our stewardship to mere activities we got programs for our church see if this fits you if it doesn't okay go try church down the road no we are stewarding one another to maturity we don't just do

Bible studies just to have something on the calendar and if nobody attends what are we even doing which begs the question what are we even hearing are we hearing and the second thing is to let us work on our consistency in our gatherings whether we gather on Sunday morning whether we gather at Bible studies whether we gather at small groups let this be consistent why why do we do this because some punk up on stage is being dumb telling me what to do causing you to lose sleep on Sunday morning how dare him you don't know my kids Brent you think they're swinging from the fan they're ripping that fan down you don't know trust me I know why do I ask you to do this to be consistent because

[36 : 56] I wouldn't ask you to do something that God's word doesn't command God's word says it and commands this and we have to get better at this what you do with this command is between you and God and not me I'm simply a messenger of the word heralding the king's message and when we do things when we hear and when we do let's get busy together if we one thing that I would love to do this year is start a youth group for teenagers we have a lot of teenagers that are attending and I know the power of youth group outside of the walls and things like that if you feel called to preach then let's get you preaching if you feel called to lead then let's get you leading if you feel like you're stuck and in a rut spiritually let's create a discipleship plan just for you we'll get together at Panera and we will disciple with one another and it doesn't matter that you're the one struggling because it's equally encouraging just to my soul as it is to yours we need to do this together in prayer specifically maturity not just a blanket word we need this turn to be defined in this church because

I could just be mature good alright well what's that mean alright this means to be consistent this year and to pray be hearers and doers we need this turn to be broken down and even if this year

holds spiritual growth we look back and we see we've grown spiritually leaps and bounds that doesn't mean you're done this means that the same is true in 2021 2031 2051 can you imagine 2051 you want to know how many grays I'm really going to have it means we keep going together united forgiving one another bearing with one another holding each other up if we're struggling and if one has a disagreement with one another we're allowed to disagree we don't have to compromise and get along bless their heart I love her it's okay sometimes to disagree we need to disagree well though if you're losing sleep over your disagreements we're doing it wrong we'll just put it that way you know me

I'm very patient so let's take steps together please join me in the stewardship in all that we do let us be hearers of the word let us show up let us be doers of the word and see what God does this year in this church and look back upon the glory of God let's pray