

Readings

Scripture

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ...

²⁶ But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ 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. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 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.

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

- James 1:12, 22-27 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 (English Standard Version)

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

- Micah 6:8 (English Standard Version)

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

- Amos 5:21-24 (English Standard Version)

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"

- Hebrews 10:5-7 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

A New Paradigm - Part 3

James 1:12, 22-27

True Religion

Brad Anderson

What if our trials are in fact the very instrument God uses to make us whole?

(James 1:12)

If that is to become our vantage point in this life, James indicates that certain themes must also become our norm...

Trust in doing... (James 1:22)

- I hear ya, but!...Doing what you hear is what makes trusting difficult.

Trust in exposing... (James 1:23-25)

- That's not what I remember seeing!...A short look in the mirror is what makes trusting difficult.

Trust in worshiping... (James 1:26-27)

- I keep failing the tests!...The test is not what makes trusting difficult

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- What was your hardest subject in school? What was your easiest? What did you fail? Did you ever get a perfect score?
- James offers three tests that get at the core of true religion. Read James 1:22-26. How do the three tests present a summary of what doing looks like in the Christian life? Jesus constantly reaches toward those living at the margins of society, the at-risk populations, those who persistently find themselves in hopeless conditions. What characterizes true religion: action or belief? Why do you think this is so?
- How can one attain "pure religion" and "the righteous life" God desires? Look closely at James 1:20, 27. Be careful how you answer.
- When did you get serious about applying God's word to your life?
- Who are the needy in your community? What are you doing to help them?