

Act On What Your Hear
James 1:19-27
February 15, 2009
John and Naomi Lederach

Introduction

Note 3rd verse of song – There’s a wideness in God’s mercy -

Relation of O.T. and N.T. reading

Background to James.

A sermon

Who wrote it?

The Ossuary that was found?

“James the son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” For what reason?

James is in the tradition of wisdom literature. Folks are in the church and he is telling them how to live. Profound wisdom here! People do not all feel the same about getting advice!

The Outline!

1. Lead with your ears

2. Follow with your tongue

3. Let anger straggle along in the rear.

1. Lead with your ears Be Quick to Listen

What do we need to hear? v.22-25

How about starting with the **family**?

Listening to children –

New way of listening to Naomi’s sister, Mim, who had a stroke. Cannot read or write, speech is garbled, but she can play the piano beautifully as she always did. Book – My Stroke of Insight - ..is that at the core of my right Hemisphere’s consciousness is a character that is directly connected to my feeling of deep inner peace. It is completely committed to the expression of love, joy, compassion in the world.” Listening to Mim –effort, time, patience – a new way of listening.

I remember so well when we were faced with an extremely difficult situation! So easy to relate on the basis of Theology, Right and wrong Judgments that would have separated us for LIFE. James says: Lead with your ears!

John Howard Yoder in the July 2003 issue of Mennonite Quarterly Review - speaking about John Howard Yoder and “Knowing the Truth.”

“A non-violent approach to knowing would prefer to err on the side of ‘listening’ too much rather than too little. All voices within the church community must be treated with respect for the church to be genuinely healthy.” “People with different perspectives must listen to one another in an open, safe, respectful conversation or they will not move toward truth.”

Listening also means ‘listening’ to what behaviors mean because behaviors do have meaning. People ask in a variety of ways to be heard, sometimes quietly and sometimes with actions that are destructive.

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When we moved to Belfast we posted a quote by Max Warren at various “intersections” in our home to remind us of what it means to listen.

“Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on someone’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that GOD was there before our arrival.”

Robert Frost says in this couplet, “ We dance around in a ring .. and suppose,
But the secret sits in the middle and knows.”

Frost knows and honors the transcendent secret of listening to each other.

2. Follow with your tongue v. 26

My understanding of evangelism is consistent with the wisdom of James.

“Speak for Jesus at all times, using words only when necessary

But what do we need to say?

“Follow with your tongue”

We do have something to say!

+ So easy to use our words to defend our selves and our ideas.

But what about using words for those who cannot speak for themselves?

+ A voice against injustice, a voice for the poor, those without health care, those who suffer because of race, sexual orientation or age,

+ A voice for the immigrant,

+ A voice for the sons and daughters of Ishmael- note Jimmy Carter’s book.

We must be voices against the **Mendacity** of our world.

Listen to the voices of mendacity:

+ Nations hate us because of our freedom

+ The way to peace is to hunt and kill people in the name of the Lord

+ Bring them on - we want them dead or alive!

+ Peacemaking or reconciliation is a harmless hobby to occupy nice people.

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- + Sensitivity shows weakness - Let's just nuke them!
- + Calling people and nations evil - terrorists are barbaric - we of course are "freedom fighters."
- + Words so often spoken are words of destruction, aggression, dominance, revenge, fear and arrogance. Contrast those words with the words of Jesus who speaks TRUTH in language that must shape and direct us, and move our words to actions:
- + Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- + Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.
- + Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the children of God.
- + But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

(Workshop at Corrymeela - can we imagine enemy as friend?)

- + -Einstein has said, "You do not correct an injustice by using the same methods that cause the offense."
- + Having Catholics and Prots. Sit "at table" with each other...Safe place to listen and speak, acknowledge fears, etc.

The hymn writer has it right in respect to a peaceable witness:

Will you let me be your servant - Let me be as Christ to you? Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

Follow with your tongue

3. Let anger straggle along in the rear!

Note what James says. Compost that grows a garden! v. 20-21

Anger is sometimes a difficult concept for us! But it can also be a motivating factor. It moves us in to actions, sometimes for good and sometimes in hurtful ways,
"Those things you cannot talk out,
We will act out and the acting out is usually more hurtful and destructive.
The acting out is usually much more hurtful.

Act upon what you hear. - but...

If it is in acts of revenge, it is destructive for me and the other person. But if it is motivation into action to correct a hurt or injustice it is indeed "**Holy and Just anger**".

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Anger is a Secondary feeling - The primary feeling is HURT!

Hurt - anger - retaliation.

Reconciliation is always a journey back to and through conflicts. How can we sustain a journey toward those things we fear most?

Quoting Karen Horst Cobb

“I believe the example of Jesus and his admonition to love your enemies, bless those who curse you. Do I understand how this works on a global scale? Do I understand what Jesus would say to all the world’s leaders? NO! I don’t understand how the example of Christ’s life and his well communicated message of love, compassion and peace works in the world today. That’s why I need faith. Am I always correct in my assessments and actions? NO. That’s why I need grace. Am I brave and unafraid? NO! That’s why I need the perfect love that casts out fear.”

Verse 27 - Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight and guard against corruption from the godless world.”

Prayer - Lewis Smedes

Oh Lord, once I was smart enough to know a just war when I saw it, the kind of war I thought you would approve of.

I am not so smart anymore. Every war looks evil to me now

And even the war that may appear well begun becomes evil before it is over.

So let us have no more of just wars; They are the worst kind.

Now, at last, give us a just peace. It’s time, Lord. Past time.

Time for Shalom

Shalom for our breaking hearts. It’s time. **Summary v. 27**