

A HARD LOOK IN THE MIRROR (MK 7, 1-8, 14-15, 21-23 JAS 1, 17-27)
The Rev. Corinne Hodges, Sun., Aug. 30, 2009, SJOC

- I. Self-portrait at parents' house
 - A. Not pretty picture-tough time, can see it on my face (alone, purpose, God's meaning for my life)
 - B. Realistic— colors harsh
 - C. Undoubtedly me w/ all my lines
 - D. Mom won't take down—image is more than outside, but what was going on inside me at the time
 - E. Each time I see, mixed feelings—impt. reminder
- II. In James, mirror as wise tool
 - A. Mirrors in NT times
 1. Highly polished metal, not glass
 2. Unclear image
 3. To really see oneself took time, intentional, otherwise just surface view
 - B. Mirror as metaphor for truth teller for religion/faith; whether sincere or not
 1. Gospel —Pharisees hypocrites who do all right religious things following human traditions, but hearts far from God
 2. Lips vs. heart/practice what preach
 3. External image vs. inside real self
 - C. Blame Pharisees, but to look deeply & honestly at ourselves (self-portrait, mirror, honest friend) takes courage, for our reflections hold us accountable
- III. Yet James urges take closer look at what we see in mirror--not just what we see on outside. Offers us a step-by-step guide of what to do as we study our image:
 - A. #1: Listen to Gospel/Word—voice that tells you what you see/what God knows
 1. Face who we are & who we are not
 2. In terms of our faith, how our words & actions lineup w/ one another
 3. Focus not just on outward practices (Pharisees washing hands, food, kitchen utensils; for us church, language, commandments), (Jesus says) inner conditions of hearts
 4. Resist urge to walk/run away from what we see— don't always like human nature, mistakes (denial, escape), but face them head on & accept
 - B. #2: Remove all moral filth--seek to get rid of whatever inside us is opposed to God & God's message: Purification/cleansing process
 1. Clean house, car, gardens, hair, clothes, bodies, **but how much time do we spend cleansing inner selves?**
 2. Jesus: "The things that come out are what defile." Things in us
 3. Defile can lead to other unpleasant de-words: desecrate, destruct & destroy. Rid ourselves of all jealousy, anger, hatred, grudges, resentment, bitterness.
 - C. #3: Accept Word—implanted in souls; allow it to take root in selves, souls, hearts & bodies
 - D. #4: Doers of Word, whatever God says— James: True test of transformation—God's Word now moves out from self into world through things we do/ways we treat people (orphans & widows) homeless & in need. Out of God's grace flows action.
 - IV. Process of obtaining true religion that is consistent inside & out is long, detailed one—each step challenges. But very first step, the honest, hard look in the mirror may be most difficult. We have to have courage to look deep into crevices of not only

external selves, our inner hearts. Only in doing so, will we discover lives of sincere faith from which God's love and mercy flow.