

Text: James 2:14-24

Theme: A Show & Tell Faith

October 14, 2018

I don't know whether they still do it in elementary school today or not, but, as a child, I remember that show & tell day was an exciting school day. I have no clue what I may have brought, but I still remember that it was a big event. James, in our text, must have known about show & tell because those two words summarize our text. Thousands of years later, James still encourages us to maintain a show & tell faith.

I. God designed us to portray faith in action. A. However, sometimes we act like those who merely claim the faith. 1. We do so when we merely say all the right words. How many of you know someone who is always the expert on any given topic, yet they will never lift a finger to do anything? Sometimes, we act that way in the faith arena. Years ago, in college, we did some door-to-door canvassing. One question we asked was, "Do you know Christ as your Savior?" Virtually, everyone could answer the question, but, looking back, their answer told us almost nothing. We can say the right words, but James insists that words without evidence are useless.

2. We act like those who claim the faith when we think our good deeds can earn our faith. This is an instance where we clearly have the cart before the horse. We can think or even say, "Look at all I have done for others and for the church," but when those words are spoken thinking that if we do enough, we can get ourselves into heaven, we are in for a rude awakening on the Last Day. Martin Luther once wrote, "We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone." His point? Good works always follow faith or there is no faith at all. We are saved by faith alone, but what always follows true faith are good works done as a response.

B. So, how do we portray a show & tell faith? 1. We do so by getting our heart in order. Until our heart is in sync with our God, James would insist that our faith is dead. Years ago on the farm we had a New Holland wire tie baler that was more than a bit problematic. The problematic part existed because the baler required that everything always be in sync, in proper time. If it were even a bit out of time, it wouldn't tie the bales and we'd end up with loose hay instead of hay bales. In the faith arena, God says, "Put your heart in sync with Me. Keep your life in sync with Me. Only when you are in sync with Me will something useful come from your faith."

2. We portray a show & tell faith by acknowledging that faith requires actions, that actions are never optional. Are engine oil, transmission oil, and brake fluid required or optional? Is a needle in your sewing machine optional, nice but not necessary or required for sewing quilts? As James says, "The body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead," he makes it clear that actions are required; they are necessary. They must occur. In essence he says, "If you claim to have faith, the actions should always provide the evidence." A show & tell faith is always eager to provide the evidence, always eager to do so as a response to faith.

3. We portray a show & tell faith by looking for opportunities to care. How many things can you see with your eyes closed? If you closed your eyes, could you still read the words in our hymnbook, still see that stray fly buzzing around the person in the pew ahead of you? Practicing a show & tell faith prompts us to notice, to look

beyond our busyness and to notice all those hurting people around us. Suppose everyone in Taylor County noticed the needs of just one person each day for the next week. How many lives would be changed in a single week's time? As people with a show & tell faith, our God says, "Notice. It's how you demonstrate faith in action!"

4. As we notice, we also respond to the needs of others. If you went through the New Testament page by page, how many instances could you find where Jesus noticed a need, but never responded to that need? You can find instances where Jesus delayed His response, but you will never find a single instance where Jesus saw a need and did nothing. Show & tell faith is imitating Christ. But times have changed and we have so many other pressing things that need to be done! If Jesus were standing here in person this morning, I doubt any of us would attempt that excuse while standing face to face with the perfect example of a show & tell faith.

5. We portray a show & tell faith by choosing to go the extra mile. How many people do you know who seem to be so kind and caring, who seem to do so much for others without any desire for recognition? Were those people given special gifts that the rest of us lack? No. They've chosen to care, to go the extra mile. They don't do it hoping someone will notice, but hoping no one notices. As they go the extra mile, it's the heart that's providing the motivation. To portray a show & tell faith, we make a choice. We choose to go the first mile and then, we choose to go the extra mile because we know that our God has done that and even more for us.

6. We portray that faith by understanding our purpose for living. Why did God create you? Why are you in this place at this time? If we did a survey of the city of Medford, we'd get all kinds of responses to that question. But for us, as faith-filled people of God, there's only one answer. We live to be Christ to others, to be Jesus with skin on. As we realize that as our purpose, it puts a lot of other things into perspective. Suddenly, it doesn't matter if we keep up with the neighbors, if we get to the top of the heap, or if we leave our mark on this community. All of that falls by the wayside as we realize that the best thing we can do is to care like Christ cared.

7. We portray a show & tell faith by forgetting to count the cost before we act. How many of you would build a new house and never sit down with the builder to determine the cost? In our day-to-day activities, it's important and necessary to count the cost. But, in the faith arena, things are very different. In fact, things are the exact opposite. Rather than counting the cost, determining whether we have the time, or whatever else we might do, our show & tell faith says, "Go. Do what you can to relieve their pain, to lighten their load, to disperse some of their heartache because God will always, always supply all you need."

8. Show & tell - it may still be part of the classroom in elementary school or maybe not. Either way, Jesus, our Teacher, says to us every morning, "Today is show & tell day. It's the day for you to show & tell your faith!" Amen.