

James 1:17-27;

(Mark 7: 1-7, 14-15, 21-23)

I have a Cookery Book and my own journal of recipes that are good and I am able to do. I have always found using cookery books so helpful. It tells me what ingredients to use and if I follow the instructions carefully I can produce some lovely food! It is not always easy and it often takes patience and time to cook. But I do enjoy it! If I don't use the information I have had from cookery books I find it difficult to make edible food.

We can know all the ingredients that are important to us in our lives, but unless we mix them together and follow the instructions, nothing will happen. As it says in our reading for today, we can look at ourselves in a mirror and then go away and forget what we look like.

But as v25 from James 1 reads:

*25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

God has given us all different gifts. The important thing is that all these gifts are brought together so that the result is a Church that is proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is no good having all the ingredients and seeing a picture, unless we mix all the ingredients together in the correct way and produce a lovely cake or meal. The same for our lives as Christians. It is no good having all of us being separate people and not mixing together what God has given to us for the good of all.

In these verses from James we are told that God chose to give us birth through the word of truth. Giving birth means giving new life, a new start. God loves and cares for us so much that he sent his only son Jesus in to our world. Through Jesus, who is the word of truth, God has given us that new birth, a new start, the way back to him. We have to want, and we have to decide to follow that way. We can do it through the Word of truth.

Jesus came to this earth so that we might know God. We have his story in the Bible. We have the story of how God dealt with his people from the beginning of time. And in the New Testament we have the story of Jesus' life on earth. The Word of truth is known through the written word in our bibles. Our part is to learn, to listen, to hear, and to try and understand what Jesus' life on earth means to us all. We all need to read and to try and understand what is being said to us in the words of scripture. V21 tells us to get rid of the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word that has been planted in us – it is the word made flesh that can save us and give us eternal life.

But it is not a question of just listening to what the bible says we must also do what it says. v22 "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." Because if we don't we are like the person with the mirror – we recognised what is read, but we forget as soon as we put our bibles down.

If we get to know God's word, and get to know Jesus – not just knowing about him- but knowing him as our friend and our saviour, the Word of God, we will be blessed as it reads in v25)

V18 tells us that God cares for us. He chose us. He gave us birth through the word of truth, so that we could be holy people. God wants us to grow more and more like his son. If we do that we shall gradually become more fully human and more like the person that God wants us to be, enjoying this earthly life that he has given to us. We need to know ourselves in order to allow God to make us more like him, to allow him to change us from within.

We all need to clear out the rubbish from our lives and live by God's Words. It is important that we make our decisions because we love God. I suspect for many of us often what we actually do does not always reflect what we are thinking. For the Christian the more the doing and the being (that is our innermost thoughts and desires that only we and God know about) are not separated, but based on a growing understanding of God's word, the more we will grow in God's image.

Are we like the person with a mirror, who observes, goes away, forgets? Or do we believe in the Word of God in the bible, look into it, persevere and act.

The final words in our passage today read "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

How do we decide what is of this world and what is of God in our world? I would suggest that we can only decide if we are following God's word, if we are reading it, listening to what is being said through God's word, if we are talking with one another and helping one another to understand better. God has asked us to pray to him, and prayer includes listening to what He wants to say to us as well.

So three things to remember:

1. We should all be quick to listen, (v19) particularly to hear God both in our own quiet times with Him and also to hear Him and how He is speaking to us in our daily tasks.
2. We should be open to receive the Word of God that he has planted in us. (v21)
3. We should obey – Do what it says (v22)

If we do these things then we shall be blessed and we shall be a channel of blessing others.

If you do not already read your bible regularly then please do start. You can join a group that studies the bible. You can also use Bible reading notes. If you would like any information about groups or notes do contact me through the Church Office.

Whatever you decide, remember if we are hearers of the word and not doers then we deceive ourselves. Let us try to understand continually what God's word is saying to us in all aspects of our life and then, having listened let us act on what hear.