



Pause. Listen. Act. be You.

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MONDAY 7.11.22

Listening better

Scripture: Psalm 34:11-15

Our behavior is linked to our ability to listen to *and* hear God. We can't fix ourselves or self-help-like develop new habits apart from God's leading. The better we get at listening and acting out of God's spirit, the more our tongues, lips, hearts, and minds will reflect God's spirit of peace and loving welcome.

- I wonder if God is tell us to do something specifically different today?
- How can we develop better ears to listen to God?

Prayer: Living God, we want a long and happy life. We want to have respect for you. Please help us to tell the truth and not to lie. Help us do what is good and help us to know you love us, even when we say and do what is wrong. Amen.

TUESDAY 7.12.22

Chocolate and Red Wine

Scripture: James 1:13-18

I guess not everyone is tempted by dark chocolate and red wine at the end of the night as I am, but each of us have something which leads us away from a full, lived-in experience of this life. Perhaps our biggest temptations these days is for quick and easy answers which feel good in the moment, but only lead to destruction down the road. God gives good gifts, if only we seek them.

- What good gift you've receive from God lately?
- It feels these days like something is always "changing like the shadows". How are you experiencing this reality today?

Prayer: Loving God, you are very good, and all good and perfect gifts come from you. May knowing how good you really are keeps us from anything bad that tempts us to sin. We want to live as the first taste of your good new world. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 7.13.22

Pay Attention!

Scripture: James 1:19-25

All of us are guilty of not really listening to God's word. The scripture is read aloud in worship, and we allow it to wash over us without a real effort to hear it, to take it in and understand it. And, sometimes, the word itself is difficult to approach as life altering. How could a list of ancestors possibly change our lives? But the more time with spend with scripture and in really hearing God's word, the more it will shape our lives.

- James's words hear are challenging. I wonder how we can respond positively to these words.
- What feelings do these words from James raise in your heart? Are you proud of them?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, please slow down our talking and speed up our listening. Help us not just to listen to you but to do what you tell us to do so we will be free. In the name of the Word made flesh, Amen.

THURSDAY 7.14.22

Poor Eyes

Scripture: James 2:5-17

What is marked as success by the world's standards is often upside down from God's view of a life well lived. The attitude which connects material success with quality of life is a contradiction to God's preference for those who are humble in spirit. It isn't the having of things, it is how we use them – with a generous heart or as a yard marker for a person's worth?

- Imagine Jesus was the one saying these words from James to you. How would you receive it differently? What do you like to ask Jesus about?
- We are told faith requires works – you have to act on it. How have you acted on your faith this week?

Prayer: Jesus, lover of the poor, you gave us the gift of faith. Forgive us when our faith is not alive and active. Help us show our love for you by generously helping those in need. May we serve the way you serve. Amen.

FRIDAY 7.15.22

Bridle Bits

Scripture: James 3:3-11

Americans like to picture ourselves as the captain of our ships, master of our fate, decider of our destiny. Life has a way of showing us how this understanding is wrong. It only takes a scary medical diagnosis, or a shrinking economy and rising inflation, or a pandemic, or...or... or.... We may not be in control of event, but we can control how we respond to them.

- Are you letting your anger, or frustration, or fear drive the ship of your tongue?
- Sometimes our words and actions get ahead of our inner attitude, and we don't really understand what we are feeling until we've unleashed them on someone else. When do you last experience that? How did you respond?

Prayer: Jesus, it is so hard sometimes for us to control our mouths. We say things we shouldn't say and we can't take them back. Please take over our mouths so what comes out will be fresh and life-giving. Take over our hearts, so your love will come out in our words and in our actions. Amen.

SATURDAY 7.16.22

Bad Masters

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-9, 19-25

WE can be "good" whenever things are going well, but it's much harder to know the right path when the road gets rough. As we experience more and more pressure, the temptation to become mean, hateful, disagreeable, and angry or sad and isolated becomes deeper. When we find ourselves acting in ways contradictory to our values because of an unsettled life or because we are too hesitant to seek out God's guidance in advice and implement it in our lives, we are choosing the wrong one of the two masters.

- How does a faith which sees itself outside of and/or apart from mainstream society behave differently?
- I wonder what the most authentically faith-filled response is when we are sick or in trouble?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, help us to pray when we're in trouble, when we're happy, when we're sick, and when we've sinned. Give us courage to say "I'm sorry" when we've done something wrong. Thank you for listening and for making things happen through prayers. Amen.