

Sermon James 1:17-27  
Pentecost 15B  
September 2, 2018  
Grace Lutheran Church

**Jim is the strong, quiet type,  
A member of our former congregation in North Carolina.  
He is a loving husband and father to two girls.**

**He coaches little league baseball, which always seemed odd to me  
Because I just couldn't imagine him raising his voice  
To a volume that was remotely audible  
On a field full of children under the age of 10.**

**And he certainly would never act like some of the baseball coaches  
About which we have heard stories or see in the major leagues.**

**Jim was at church regularly, dropping the girls off for youth events,  
Joining the men's group as they cooked  
For the mother's day brunch**

**Came into my office and told me he recently saw someone  
Wearing a t-shirt that said "I agree with James."**

**He told me he went up to the person and said,  
"I'm James...I'm glad you agree!"**

**We then had a brief conversation about the book of James in the NT,  
As we both assumed the t-shirt  
Was referencing the person's opinion on THAT James.**

**We talk about how Martin Luther was not a huge fan of the book,  
And that we don't often hear from it in the course**

**Of our three-year cycle of Sunday morning readings.**

**And, of course, as fate would have it...**

**This AND next week we hear passages from this little book  
Near the back of the Bible.**

**I don't often dedicate sermons, but this one is for Jim Sloman,  
With whom, I too, agree!**

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**UGH! It's so easy to get angry, isn't it!**

**I mean, think of all the times when you've lost your cool  
And said and did something in anger.**

**Someone cuts you off on the road, insults you or your family,  
Sends an anonymous note about your yard,  
Perpetuates a nasty stereotype or prejudice,  
Seems stuck in ignorance or obliviousness,**

**The world, its systems, and the people in it can drive us crazy!  
How many news stories in the paper or on TV  
Could be boiled down to someone simply being angry  
At someone else?**

**Anger and getting angry is such a rapid and well-known response,  
That dealing with it within relationships forms the bulk  
Of an entire session in my pre-marital counseling.**

**It is such a powerful emotion that it can be felt,  
Like it's something tangible, something that can be held.**

**In Star Wars, the Emperor says he can feel Luke's anger**

**As Luke watches his friends fall into a trap set by the Empire.**

**Wise Master Yoda warns that anger leads to hate,  
And hate leads to suffering.**

**Does that mean, though, that we should never get angry?  
Are Christians allowed to be angry?**

**Is anger just sitting on the couch fuming at the news,  
Sucking through our teeth at the latest primary debate,  
Or can anger be...something else?  
Can it be used for something....good?**

**Can anger, anger that follows a conversation,  
A conversation that follows listening,  
Be used to do something meaningful,  
Purposeful, even grace-full?**

**What about being angry AT suffering? Being angry AT hate?  
Being angry AT prejudice, and racism, and economic disparity?**

**After all, in James, it doesn't say that Christians  
Should never BE angry,  
But be slow to GET angry.**

**Anger is last in the list.  
It follows speech, follows conversation,  
Which itself follows quick, active, rapid, insistent,  
And care-full...listening.**

**For as many news stories boil down to anger,**

How many would not BE news stories if someone  
Or some ones had done a bit more listening?

We call a whole quarter of our worship service “Word”,  
Word to be heard, to be proclaimed, to be shared,  
Because it is important that we listen!

Important that we listen to the Word of God  
As it shapes, and guides, and informs our lives...  
Both as individuals and as a community.

Then, as James continues, our lives don’t just stop in listening,  
There is conversation, there is doing something,  
There is being doers of the Word.

The Word compels us, it calls us, to speak the Word to others.

We are called to go do something with it, do something about it,  
Not because doing affects salvation,  
But because salvation enables doing.

Enables and undergirds a people that have been quick to listen,  
Who proclaim that light is more powerful than darkness.  
That peace is more precious than violence.  
That love is stronger than hate.

And if, in our doing, our proclaiming, our living and being in the Word,  
We find that there are still those who persist  
In the ways of darkness, violence, and hate  
Perhaps it’s time to get angry about it!

A kind of anger that prompts us to listen even more,  
To converse about the issues even more,

**To do grace-full things with even more vigor,  
To promote the Kingdom of God.**

**Let's get angry that people still harm others  
And volunteer at abuse shelters and after school programs.**

**Let's get angry that the color of someone's skin  
Still sentences them to hateful speech and actions by others  
And stop hiding behind paralyzing complacency  
And talk honestly about our own feelings.**

**Let's get angry that those with mental illnesses  
Are not met with resources and tools  
To guide them out of their inner darkness  
And compel elected officials to take  
Mental health services seriously.**

**This is the Word that we hear,  
That anger can lead to change,  
Not to continued suffering.**

**That is the Word that we do,  
The Word that we WILL love our neighbors  
Just as we love ourselves,  
Just as we ourselves, are loved.**

**When we gaze into the reflective waters of our baptism,  
We see reflected back in that mirrored surface  
The very image of God.**

**People formed to listen, to speak, and maybe even get angry.  
People called to take their anger and turn it into  
Grace, hope, trust, even love.**

**It is a mirror from which we depart  
Never forgetting who and whose we are.**

**I, too, agree with James.**