

Sermon Notes: James 1:26-27

Religious “Wanna Be’s” or the Real Thing?

Theme: God has a way of bringing us down to earth. We have a good many definitions of what “real” religion is all about. Most of us don’t actually want “religion,” we want a relationship with God. Well, in this passage, God tells us what a relationship is all about.

Background: a Pharisees’ perspective on religion (see Matthew 23)

Example: Matthew 23:23 (NIV) **“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.**

Matthew 6:5 (NIV) **“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.**

James’ perspective on religion

- a. Our relationships with one another are vital and essential
- b. The exercise and ministry of grace is foundational
- c. To act like children of God in the midst of a world which does not care, is to be our heart.

So you must ask yourself:

- a. Where do you have vital relationships with other believers (we call that “fellowship?”)
- b. In what ways do you extend (God’s) grace and mercy to others?
- c. How do you live as children of God rather than simply people of the world who do not care?

A parallel prophetic perspective on religion

Micah 6:8 (NIV) **He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**