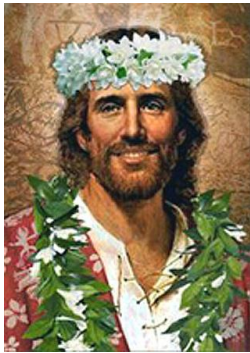


Children's Sermon: Adapted from: **There's a Law in Hawaii That Says You Have to Be Nice to People.** By Samantha Rosen, ThePointsGuy.Com, Oct 20, 2018
<https://thepointsguy.com/news/aloha-spirit-law-hawaii-be-nice/#:~:text=It's%20called%20the%20%F2%80%9CAloha%20Spirit,emote%20good%20feelings%20to%20others.>

ALOHA! How would you respond to someone saying that you "*must think and emote good feelings to others.*" That sounds like the kind of spiritual mush you would expect to hear from your yoga instructor at the end of class. But it is, in fact, an actual law in Hawaii. It's called the "**Aloha Spirit**" law, and it's encoded in the Hawaii Revised Statutes (Section 5-7.5).

Aloha is an interesting word. It can mean both "hello" and "goodbye" but it also has a deeper cultural and spiritual significance to native Hawaiians, including feelings of love, affection, peace, compassion, mercy, and recognition of the unity of all humanity, towards the person being so greeted.

Thus, Hawaiian law declares that the, "The Aloha Spirit is a coordination of mind and heart within each person," so that they think and act kindly towards others. Or in layman's terms: **be nice or leave.**



Actually, this is great advice to live by, which also sounds similar to Jesus' teaching that the greatest thing we can do is to *love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and your neighbor as yourself.* But I think Jesus teaching even goes a bit further, because when you first love God – the creator of our world and everyone living in it – then certainly you should also be loving both other people and the world He created for us all to live in. Thus, whether or not we live in Hawaii, we can all strive to live by the Aloha Spirit because we already know and love the source of everything aloha stands for. So, Aloha, in Jesus' name.

Sermon: Weighty Words to live by: Amen & Sanctification James 1:17-27

Portions adapted from "The Sanctification Mirror" by Troy Borst @ SErmonCentral.Com

When you think about it, every culture does have its own collection of special words like ALOHA or MAHALO, which you normally wouldn't expect to hear outside of Hawaii, or a Tiki Bar, or in this case a church in Bedford, but as mentioned during the children's sermon, such words always carry more meaning within the culture where they live than when merely being repeated by outsiders.

In the Christian Church, we also use certain words that have great meaning for us, which you don't often hear used anywhere else. For example: **AMEN**

"Amen" is used 57 times in the Old and New Testament and it is the last word in the Bible (Revelation 22:21). But because it is not a word used outside of church circles.

What does it mean? Why is it at the end of every prayer?

Well, like "aloha," "amen" can mean different things depending where it is used in a sentence.

- At the beginning of a statement, amen means "Truly" or "I am saying the truth."
- Shouted out in the middle of a sermon it means: Preach it, I agree with you.
- At the end of a sentence or prayer, the phrase means "so be it" or "may it be fulfilled."
- For Battlestar Galactica fans, it means "so say we all!"

So, at the end of a public prayer, saying amen means you agree with the person who is praying... you agree with the sentiments expressed and requests made; you join with the speaker in asking God to hear and respond to the prayer.

At the end of a private prayer, saying amen means something a little different I think. At the end of a personal prayer (just you and God talking), "amen" is a way for you to say "*this is what I ask relying on your will to accomplish.*" It is the same thing as saying "not my will, but what You want God." Saying amen means we offer our prayers, but take His answer no matter the answer.

Another churchy word – and a \$5 dollar word – that we pretty much just use only among Christians is... **SANCTIFICATION**, which is perhaps better understood by its simple definition: "**to be made holy.**" Like aloha or amen, sanctification also has more than one meaning depending upon how it is used, and who is using it.

When referring to what God has done for us, sanctification means that through our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God's son, God the Father has both declared and also re-birthed us [made us into being] "holy people" – people who can live with and be useful to our holy God. This part of sanctification is completely God's work within us. It is His doing. As the Apostle Paul wrote ...

... Christ loved the church
and gave himself up for her,
in order to **make her holy**
by cleansing her with the
washing of water by the word,
Ephesians 5:25-26

That's one meaning of the word "sanctify:" what God has done for us through Christ Jesus His son. The other meaning of this word is what we are expected to be doing because God has declared us to be His holy people. **Now that we have been made holy, we are expected to work at becoming holier every day of our life.** That kind of Sanctification is what the apostle Peter means when he writes...

As he who called you is holy,
be holy yourselves
in all your conduct;
1 Peter 1:15



Now the interesting thing is that the word “sanctification” does not show up in our scripture reading today, in fact it doesn’t show up anywhere in James’ letter to the churches, but both being made and becoming holy is what his letter is all about.

For instance in the “being made holy by God” use of the word, James writes

In fulfillment of his own purpose
[the Father of lights] **gave us birth**
by the word of truth ...
James 1:17-18

And in the instance of “living up to the holy person which you have become” James writes....

Therefore **rid yourselves** of all ... wickedness,
and **welcome with meekness**
the implanted word that has
the power to save your souls.
James 1:21

God’s work of sanctifying us is a onetime event; it happens when we are “born again” into God’s family. But our work of sanctification is an ongoing, everyday, continual process of growing holier as we begin to think and act more like Christ Jesus our savior, our brother, our model for holy living.

- Each day we are called to be more faithful and more holy.
- Each day we are called to be more Christ-like.
- Each day we are called to follow God more than we did yesterday.

That’s our part in sanctification.

The reason why I chose today’s scripture is because while the entire Letter of James is all about telling us of ways in which we are to be growing holier, today’s portion gives a clear illustration of how we can daily grow holier. James writes...

For if any are hearers of the word and not doers,
they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror
and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like
James 1:23

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. **But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.**

James 1:22-25

Notice that in this illustration, James is comparing and contrasting two people who look into a mirror. Those who only casually glance in the mirror on their way past, soon forget what they look like. But those who “**persevere**,” meaning they purposely and continually look into the mirror over time, they are changed.

Jesus often used comparison and contrast in His illustrations as well.

- He taught about the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:26-29),
- The Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-31),
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31),
- The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14),
- and the Two Servants (Matthew 24:45-51, Mark 13:34-37, Luke 12:35-48).

Comparing things lets us see truth. Contrasting two items allows us to understand the point of what is being taught. **In each one of these illustrations we are being asked, “which of these people are you right now?”**

Here, James uses the illustration of two people looking into a mirror to explain why our daily work at sanctification [at becoming more holy] is so important. But first we need to understand what mirror it is that we are supposed to be looking into.

James writes that we are to be *doers of the word not merely hearers who deceive themselves* (vs.22). **So the mirror represents “the word,”** the Bible, the teachings of Jesus, God’s way of living, God’s will.

Since the first purpose of any mirror is self-examination, what James wants us to understand, is that it is easy to read God’s Word or hear a message and see where someone else needs to change. **It is a whole other matter to read God’s Word or hear a message which, we use like a mirror to examine ourselves truthfully and apply the lesson right to us.**

In this portion of scripture James writes that growing in holiness requires:

- We be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for anger doesn't produce God's righteousness in us; doesn't make us more holy (19-20).
- We are to get rid of moral filth
- And any other form of evil in our lives (verse 21)
- We are to humbly accept the Word of God as it is planted in us (verse 22)
- We are to do what God commands and live His way (verse 22)
- We are to watch what we say (verse 26)
- We are to look after orphans and widows (verse 27)
- We are to keep ourselves from being polluted by the world (verse 27)

If we are actually doing these things rather than just reading our Bible or hearing a sermon about them, then we are growing holier; if not then we have forgotten who we are (see also 2 Peter 1-5-9).

James is asking us to take a serious look at ourselves in the mirror of God's word and honestly decide who we are. Are we actually a faithful "doer" or only a self-deceiving hearer of God's word? **That is a rather hard challenge to face up to, but in today's casual Christian world this is a very necessary question that everyone who calls themselves Christian must ask.**

just like in Jesus' teachings...

- are we the Wise or the Foolish Builder? (Matthew 7:26-29)
- are we the returning prodigal or the stubborn stay at home, who never gets it? (Matthew 21:28-31)
- are we the Rich Man or Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
- are we the Pharisee or the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)
- what kind of servant are we? (Luke 12:35-48).

What does this illustration say to us today?

- Many people have the mistaken idea that hearing a good sermon is what makes us grow and what allows us to be blessed by God.
- Or going to church each week means we are automatically a good person.
- Or taking notes on the Bible message means we automatically know the Bible well. But we never look at them again to see how we actually need to change.

James is saying that our relationship with God is not an auto-pilot kind of relationship, but one where we must have the intention to honestly look at who we are and be going where God wants to take us in becoming more like Him!

If our intent is to become more holy, to move towards godliness, then every time we encounter the Scriptures we need to intently, honestly, realistically, look at ourselves in its reflection.

- Is anger ruling over you in some way? (1:19-20)

- Are you morally filthy and living a lifestyle you should not? (1:21, 27)
- Is God's Word planted in your heart because you study His Word? (1:22)
- Do you live His way or your way? (1:22)
- Do you curse a lot? Gossip a lot? Tear people down a lot in conversations? (1:26, 3:1-12)
- Do you help needy folks? (1:27)
- Does racism have a root in your heart? (2:1-9)
- Are you all talk with nothing to back it up when it comes to faith? (2:14-16)
- Are you selfish? (3:13-18, 4:1-6)

Only you can know how seriously you take your relationship with God and how seriously you look at yourself when looking at the Bible; how seriously you treat the teachings of Jesus.

You see James understands that Christianity is not about rules and regulations (even though those do exist), but about a "**law of liberty**" that gives us freedom to continually follow after God and as we grow into living the holy life that makes us more useful to Him.

The lesson that you should take home from this morning's message is very much dependent on where you are in your walk with the Lord. Are you working at growing or have you forgotten what it means to call yourself a Christian?

The process of sanctification, of daily growing holier in our walk with Christ, can be compared to an iceberg, which is almost 90% underwater. As the sun shines on the iceberg, the exposed part melts, moving the lower part upward. In the same way, we are usually aware of only a small part of our sinfulness and need – the small part sticking above the water – which is all we can deal with at any one time. However, as the light of God's word shines on our lives, it changes us both in the areas we know about, and helps us become aware of new areas next in need of the work of God.

(ministry127.com/resources/illustration/sanctification-demonstrated-by-an-iceberg)

But those who look into the perfect law,
the law of liberty, and persevere,
being not hearers who forget but
doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing
Acts 1:25

One more thing that James says in this passage is that the Gospel is "*the perfect law of liberty.*" What does he mean by that? Well, each of us deals with our sinful nature in our lives. All of us sin. All of us do and say things that are wrong. We have wrong attitudes. Sin keeps us trapped in guilt and separated from God. Sin separates us from God and actually restricts us from following Him.

But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act — they will be blessed in their doing

Amen?

Lets pray about this.