November 8, 2026 | ***Faith With Its Work Boots On*** | Pastor Eddie Eddy

Scripture: James 2:14–18 (NIV) **Faith and Deeds**

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

Faith With Its Work Boots On

Two weeks ago we talked about how God's grace works in our lives. We talked about prevenient grace, the grace that reaches for us before we even know God is there. Justifying grace, the grace that brings us into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. And sanctifying grace, the grace that continues working in us, changing us and making us more like Jesus.

We discovered that being a Methodist isn't simply about knowing where we're going when we die. It's about knowing who we're following while we're alive. But that brings us to another question. **If God's grace is really changing us, shouldn't there be some evidence?** If we've been following Jesus for twenty or thirty years, shouldn't something about the way we live look different?

It should…because John Wesley never intended Methodism to be a spectator sport. Christianity wasn't supposed to be something we watched somebody else do on Sunday morning. It was supposed to shape the way we lived every day of the week.

James asks a challenging question in our Scripture this morning. He says, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?" Then he gives an example. Suppose somebody comes to you without enough clothing or food, and you say, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but you don't actually do anything to help them.

James asks, "What good is it?" And then he makes this statement: **"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."**

Now that might sound a little confusing after what we talked about last time. Paul told us in Ephesians that we are saved by grace through faith, not by works. And now James is telling us that faith without works is dead. So which one is it?

Well…both. They're not contradicting each other. **Paul tells us how we are saved. James tells us what a living faith looks like after we've experienced that salvation.** We aren't saved by good works, but the grace that saves us should produce good works.

And that's exactly what John Wesley believed.

Wesley understood that Christianity had to be more than something we believed in our heads. It had to become a way of life. That's why those early Methodists prayed together, studied Scripture, held one another accountable, cared for the poor, and visited the sick and imprisoned. They weren't doing those things to earn God's love. They were doing them because God's love was changing their lives.

Wesley eventually gave the early Methodist societies three simple rules to help them live out their faith. We know them today as **the Three General Rules: Do no harm. Do good. And attend upon the ordinances of God.** That third rule is often expressed today as "Stay in love with God." I like to say, stay in constant contact with God.

Now those rules aren't complicated. But if we actually lived by them every day, I think we'd be surprised at how much our lives would change.

Let's break them down a bit.

The first rule is…Do no harm.

That sounds easy enough, doesn't it? Most of us would say, "Well, I'm not out there intentionally hurting people." But Wesley understood that doing harm involves more than physically hurting somebody. It includes the way we speak, the way we treat people, and the way our decisions affect others.

Think about how easily we can hurt somebody with our words. Sometimes we say things in anger that we wish we could take back. Sometimes we participate in gossip without considering the damage it might cause. And sometimes we hurt people simply because we're more interested in being right…than being kind.

I think that's one of the challenges of living in the world today. Everybody has an opinion about everything, and we've gotten pretty comfortable telling everybody else exactly what we think. But just because we have the right to say something…doesn't mean it's the right thing to say.

Wesley's first rule challenges us to stop and think before we act or speak. **Will what I'm about to do help somebody, or will it hurt them? Am I treating this person as somebody created in the image of God?**

Sometimes doing no harm means refusing to participate in gossip, choosing not to join in the criticism, or simply refusing to respond to anger with more anger.

But Wesley didn't stop there, because Christianity isn't simply about avoiding bad behavior.

His second rule was this…Do good.

Now we're moving beyond what we shouldn't do and beginning to talk about what we should do. Wesley believed that followers of Jesus should actively look for opportunities to help other people. Not just the people we like. Not just the people who agree with us. Not just the people who attend our church. **All people, as we have opportunity.**

And that's exactly what Jesus taught when He told us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Notice that Jesus didn't say, "Love your neighbor as long as they're easy to get along with." He simply said, **"Love your neighbor as yourself."**

And Church, that's where faith starts getting its work boots on.

Because loving our neighbor isn't simply having warm feelings toward somebody. Sometimes love means getting involved, giving up some of our time, or helping somebody who can't do anything for us in return.

We see examples of that right here at Back Roads. Think about the Summer Food Program, Blessing in the Bags, Feed My Starving Children, the food pantry, our mission trips, and the people who quietly visit somebody who is sick or lonely. Those aren't simply activities on the church calendar. **They're opportunities to put our faith into practice.**

But here's where I want to challenge us. It's easy to look at those ministries and say, "Look at all the good things our church is doing." And we should be thankful for them. But Wesley's rule wasn't simply that the church should do good. **Every follower of Jesus should be looking for opportunities to do good.**

And that doesn't always require a committee, a budget, or an organized ministry. Sometimes it's checking on a neighbor, encouraging somebody who's struggling, or taking a few minutes to listen to somebody who needs to be heard.

The question isn't simply, "What is my church doing?" The question is, **"What am I doing with the opportunities God places in front of me?"**

Now Wesley understood something else. If we're going to live this way, we need more than good intentions. We need a relationship with Jesus that continues to grow.

And that brings us to his third rule: **Attend upon the ordinances of God.**

That's an old-fashioned way of saying we need to faithfully participate in the things God has given us to nurture our relationship with Him. Things like prayer, reading Scripture, worship, Communion, fasting, and Christian fellowship. We call these the **means of grace** because they are ordinary ways God works in our lives.

Remember sanctifying grace…the work of the Holy Spirit making us more like Jesus? These are some of the ways we make ourselves available to that work.

And Wesley understood something important about our spiritual growth. **We weren't created to follow Jesus alone.**

The early Methodists met in small groups where they could talk honestly about their faith, pray for one another, and hold one another accountable. They weren't simply gathering to learn more information about the Bible. They wanted to help one another become better disciples of Jesus Christ.

That's one of the reasons we share joys and concerns during worship. It's also why we have Growth Groups at Back Roads. They're not simply another activity to fill up your calendar. They're opportunities to build relationships, study Scripture, encourage one another, and grow together in our faith.

You know…sometimes we need somebody in our lives who loves us enough to ask a difficult question. Somebody who notices when we're struggling. Somebody who reminds us **who** we're supposed to be following when we begin wandering in the wrong direction.

Because let's face it, most of us are pretty good at recognizing the things other people need to work on. We're not always quite as good at recognizing those things in ourselves.

But that's part of Christian fellowship. We help one another grow.

Did you notice how these three rules work together? **Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.** They're three parts of the same Christian life. As our relationship with God grows, it should change the way we treat people.

That's what Wesley meant when he talked about **personal holiness and social holiness.** Our relationship with God matters, but so does our relationship with the people around us. We can't separate the two.

And that's why James is so direct in our Scripture today. He isn't saying that we can earn our salvation by doing enough good things. He's saying that **a faith that never makes a difference in the way we live…is missing something really important.**

Now I want to be careful here because I don't want anybody leaving this morning thinking that being a good Methodist means you have to volunteer for three more committees, attend every church activity, and fill every spare minute with something religious.

That's not what Wesley was teaching.

The goal isn't to make ourselves busier. We don't want to be busy like the guy straightening the chairs on the Titanic. **The goal is to become more like Jesus.**

And sometimes that means doing something…sometimes it means stopping something…and sometimes it means slowing down long enough to spend time with the One we're supposed to be following.

So maybe we need to ask ourselves a few questions this morning.

Am I doing harm through my words, my attitudes, or my actions? Am I looking for opportunities to do good, or am I waiting for somebody else to take care of things? And am I making time for my relationship with Jesus, or have I become so busy that I've neglected the One who gives my life meaning?

Those aren't always comfortable questions. But they're good and necessary questions.

Friends, we've spent three weeks asking why we're Methodists. We've learned about John Wesley, we've talked about God's grace, and today we've discovered that the grace working within us should become visible in the way we live.

Being Methodist isn't simply about understanding what Wesley taught. It's about putting into practice what Jesus taught.

I don't want Back Roads to simply be known as a church that has good programs or nice buildings. I want us to be known as a church filled with people who genuinely love Jesus and demonstrate that love in the way they treat others.

Because the greatest evidence that God's grace is working in us isn't how much we know about grace. **It's how much the people around us experience the love of Jesus through the way we live.**

So here's my challenge for this week. Don't try to change everything in your life by next Sunday. Just start with Wesley's three simple rules. Before you speak or act, ask yourself, "Am I doing harm?" As you go through your day, look for an opportunity to do something good for somebody else. And somewhere along the way, make time to be with God, not because you have to check something off a list, but because you want to grow closer to Him.

And remember, we're not doing these things to convince God to love us. **We're doing them because He already does.**

Next week we're going to bring this series home and talk about what all of this means for us as Global Methodists and as Back Roads Church.

Church, being Methodist isn't simply about having the right name on the sign, knowing the right theology, or belonging to the right denomination. It's about following Jesus in a way that makes a difference.

That's faith with its work boots on.

To God be the glory. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering:

Church, when we look at the ministries of Back Roads, we see how God takes what we offer and uses it to make a difference in people's lives. Sometimes that's through the time we give, sometimes through the talents we share, and sometimes through our financial generosity. Each gift becomes part of something greater than ourselves.

As we prepare to receive our offering this morning, I invite you to give with a grateful heart, recognizing that everything we have is a blessing from God. May our generosity continue opening doors for ministry, reaching people with the Good News, and bringing hope to those who need it most.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, as we prepare to leave this place, we thank You for the reminder that our faith was never meant to be confined to these walls. You have called us to be Your hands and feet in a world that desperately needs to experience Your love.

Lord, help us recognize those moments when our words might cause harm, and give us the wisdom to choose kindness instead. Open our eyes to the needs around us and give us willing hearts to respond. And when the demands of life begin pulling us in every direction, remind us to make time for You, the One who gives us strength and purpose.

Father, we also dedicate the gifts that have been given today. Bless those who have given and the resources entrusted to this church. Guide us to use them wisely, faithfully, and with a heart for reaching others. May every ministry we support and every life we touch bring glory to Your name.

Now send us into the week ahead, not simply as people who have heard Your Word, but as disciples who are willing to live it. May others come to know Jesus because of the way we love, serve, and care for them.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.