

Interactive lesson



picture screencapture from
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/marshmallow-test.html>

Navidad, A. E. (2020, Nov 27).
Marshmallow test experiment and
delayed gratification.
Simply Psychology.

What do you see? <Let them respond>

A famous study of children was done using marshmallows to see if they would wait for a bigger treat rather than eating it immediately when left alone. *If you were told you had to wait for a reward, would you be able to?* <Let them respond>

Psychologists have done a number of follow up studies since the original one at Stanford published in 1970. They found that things like being able to see the treat or having distractions to keep them busy while waiting affected how well they waited for their reward. *What would help you to wait for it?*

<Let them respond>

Children who trust that they will be rewarded for waiting are significantly more likely to wait than those who do not trust that. *What kinds of things help you build trust in what you are told?*

<Let them respond>

We are told we can have a better life by trusting God and doing as Jesus taught, yet often we are tempted

to sin. *What happens when we give in to our selfish impulses?* <Let them respond>

How are other people affected when they see our choices? How might our choices affect their faith? <Let them respond>

Let us always strive to “be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” – both for our own sakes and for the sake of others, in Jesus’s name.

Gospel lesson

We skip back to Mark this week with Jesus pointing out the difference between doing the proper thing and doing things properly.



background picture adapted from
<https://wallpapersgood.com.de/mood/light-the-sun-sunset-sea-heart-love-hands-w138870/download/1280x720>

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 (NRSV)

¹ Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him,

² they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them.

³ (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat

unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders;

⁴ and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.)

⁵ So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

⁶ He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;

⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

⁸ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

¹⁴ Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand:

¹⁵ there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile."

²¹ For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder,

²² adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.

²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "I Want a Principle Within" UMH #410>

Message: Avoiding Anger



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/doers-of-the-word/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Dearest God, You are good, and all that You provide for us is good.

As we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may continually choose Your ways - those that address our true needs - above what we errantly think will satisfy our immediate desires. Amen.



We begin the “Doers of the Word” series today with “Avoiding Anger”. To summarize:

“James gives us a chance to reflect on the nature of Christian service and how we can continue our mission of {making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world} by engaging with our wider community in acts of service.

One thing that is clear from current sociological research is that while there are many who question the institution of the church, getting involved in providing real help to better our neighborhoods and to lift up the individuals and families within them is an easy entry into the worship life of the church.

James asks us to maintain an outward focus, even when we gather for worship.”

“Many schools [begin] next week. [0]n the brink of that immersion into learning and community exercise, we focus on being doers of the word.”

Our first step in that is avoiding anger. So often, anger puts up needless barriers that prevent our developing stronger relationships with one another (and with God).



*pictures cropped from
screenshot of [https://
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=4KC7xE4fg0w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KC7xE4fg0w)*

The Bible Project

Look at the beauty God created for us to have: In the Song of Solomon, we hear the call of one lover to another for a tryst. The whole book of Song of Solomon is interludes of poetry with them seeking and finding each other, always in love, the only ones in the world for one another.

The power and intensity of this pure love shows God's gift to devoted couples; they are vulnerable to one another but safe in a relationship untainted by sin. The beauty of this relationship is well worth celebrating.

King Solomon was also celebrated, in the psalm reading, as a recipient of God's blessings because he loved righteousness and hated wickedness. If only he had stayed righteous instead of being swayed to idolatry by his pagan wives!

If only we stayed righteous instead of being swayed to putting things not of God's love as our priority! We are so blessed by God, yet tragically we are often our own undoing.



picture from personal photos

My older brothers used to get along well enough – even stood as best man at each other’s wedding – until they had a falling out. Each was too stubborn to accept the other’s point of view, so for a decade they did not speak to one another.

Then Ron got lung cancer. During the year in which he lost his battle for life, Duncan and he finally made peace. But in their anger, they had lost ten years in which they could have shared so much...

And there are so many other examples of relationships broken in anger, left to fester. I suspect all of us can think of several, some all-too-close to home.

James warns us about such things, reminding his readers that “your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.” This letter, which John Wesley found very inspirational, focuses on the struggles of believers living in a materialistic world. It emphasizes that faith results in works of the Spirit.

This is as opposed to works of the law, which fail to justify people before God – it is only through faith that we are justified (Paul wrote about that a lot). Love of God and of people drives us to do things – the works of the Spirit – which sometimes contradict the Mosaic law.

In the Gospel lesson, the Pharisees bring up the

requirement to wash hands before eating, which the disciples did not do that day.



Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes who, upon observing the miracles He did, sought to discredit them with ritual technicalities. Blinded by anger about Jesus's not following the letter of the Mosaic law (and probably some of the other evil intentions Jesus mentioned), they were missing the awesome gifts God put in front of them.

Jesus, of course, took it deeper. By dwelling in anger about something that did no harm (except bothering them because they thought things should be done differently), the Pharisees were poisoning their own hearts and spewing evil to poison the hearts of others.

They did not have to confront Jesus in public and seek to undermine His ministry; they could instead have sought to make His ministry moot by helping the poor and needy in their distress. But they made a

choice based on the evil intent of their hearts, and so they defiled their souls.

You see, just as a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, so the journey into sinful, hardened hearts begins with the first evil choice. Dwelling in that evil leads to further evil choices on that path and prevents good that otherwise might be – like my brothers holding onto their anger and not speaking for ten years.



*background pictures
(no words) from <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
and <https://livingontilt.com/2017/01/24/everybody-needs-a-heart-transplant/>*

I was taught growing up, and it was emphasized during the pandemic, that washing hands is important for people's health. I was also taught growing up, and it is emphasized during my studies, that washing our hearts in the blood of Jesus, His love and forgiveness, is important for everyone's wellbeing.

Avoid anger and other evil intents. Let God cleanse you of wickedness and implant the Word that has the power to save your souls. Seek not just to hear of Jesus's love, but to emulate it with actions that produce fruits of the Spirit. Think about what our

community needs and how we can help with it. By focusing on that, we enable {the good that God puts before us and our loved ones} to be more known and enjoyed.

Let us now respond by reciting together:

The Nicene Creed

UMH #880

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in the one holy catholic* and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism **universal*
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

<Doxology>

<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

Generous, giving God; we offer our gifts to you in
gratitude for all the blessings you rain down upon
us.

Your sunshine warms us, your earth feeds us, and your
word nourishes us.

More than these gifts of money, we give ourselves—our
time and our energy—that we might be doers of your
word and not just hearers only.

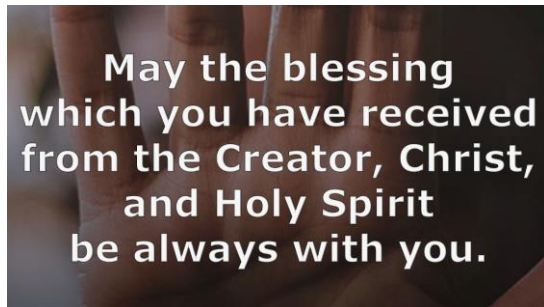
Use our gifts and guide us with Your wisdom in our
daily lives.

- Help us, Lord, with healing touch and comfort for:
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 - **Covid** - delta outbreaks, vaccine issues worldwide
 - **Kabul** - Afghanistan withdrawal/bombings
 - **Places devastated by natural disasters** - wildfires, hurricanes
- Thanks for
 - -
 - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Family far off
 - Travelers
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
 - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
 - bring world peace
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" TFWS #2171>

<Benediction>



background picture adapted from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/does-of-the-word/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

As we leave this place of sanctuary, let us go out into the world with the understanding that we are not to dwell in anger, not to act in spite, nor even to judge those who are not like us.

No longer make distinctions like saints and sinners, but **consider everyone blessed** because we all are children of the Almighty God.

And may the blessing which you have received from the Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit be always with you.

Amen.