

# Pure and Undefined Religion

*Spiritual Maturity*

By Rev. Erik Guichelaar

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Luke 10; James 1:26-27  
**Preached on:** Sunday, November 12, 2023

## Grace Protestant Reformed Church

O-11225 8th Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

**Website:** [www.graceprc.org](http://www.graceprc.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc)

We turn in scripture this evening first to Luke chapter 10, verses 25 through 37. This is where Jesus gives the parable of the good Samaritan. And then second, we turn to James chapter 1. Luke 10, beginning at verse 25.

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29 But he, willing [wanting] to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he [the lawyer] said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

So far we read from Luke 10, then we also turn to James chapter 1 and let's start at verse 22 reviewing what we looked at last week. James 1, verse 22,

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto

a man beholding his natural face in a glass [in a mirror]: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway [immediately] forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

And now the text, "If any man among you seem to be religious," by the way, let's keep our Bibles open after we read this.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, last week Sunday evening when we looked at verses 22 through 25, the question that came before us was this: are we doers of the word, that is, not only this, are we hearers of the word, are we listening to the word of God with our undivided attention, that was the sermon before, that was the passage before, but now also this, are we actually doing it? And last week we looked at that question specifically from the point of view of self-examination. We looked at those verses as part of a preparatory service with a view to celebrating the Lord's Supper this morning. Remember, we asked, are we repenting of our sins? Are we looking alone to Jesus Christ as our Savior? And are we honestly endeavoring to live our lives in thankfulness to the Lord? Are we doing these things?

Well, the text before us this evening really continues that line of thought that we looked at last week. It's a very similar passage, but now tonight we approach this passage as part of an applicatory service. We've been to the Lord's Supper, we've enjoyed that word of salvation, we've had that experience of enjoying peace with God, we've been reminded of what Jesus has done and who he is as our Savior, and now the question comes to us again, are we doers of the word? But this time, instead of emphasizing that idea of self-examination, what we want to do is bring this word across the pulpit tonight as a word of encouragement and exhortation. Congregation, if we know our salvation in Jesus Christ, if we truly know the unconditional love of God and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, if this morning we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, that he graciously forgives us all our sins, and he causes us to sit at his supper table and commune with him, then in response, let's do what the Lord wants us to do and let's do it from the heart. Let's be happy. Let's exercise self-control. Let's live in love and kindness with each other. Let us walk a holy, unspotted life. Let us practice a pure and undefiled religion, which is pleasing in the sight of our Lord. Let us truly, coming from the Lord's Supper, be not only hearers of the word, but doers also.

We take as our theme tonight, "Pure and undefiled Religion," and we look at that theme under three points. First, we look at the idea; second, we look at the characteristics of pure and undefiled religion; and then third, we look at the encouragement and the motivation. As I said, the text this evening really continues the thought of what we looked at last week, and that's obvious right when you look at the beginning of verse 26, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Similar concepts as last week.

Notice a few things about verse 26. Three things. First, notice the word "seem," "If any among you seem to be religious," and the way that we might naturally read that in the King James is like this, "If any of you, if any person appears to be religious," but really the meaning of those words is this, "If any person thinks himself to be religious, if any person considers himself so that he seems to himself to be a religious man," that's the idea. What James is talking about is a person who has the self-righteous, smug attitude about himself. He thinks he's very religious. He considers himself religious but the fact is, he's deceiving himself. That's why the second half of verse 26 is worded the way that it is. It's kind of clumsy, it seems to us, but that's the idea. "If any man among you thinks himself to be religious, but doesn't bridle his tongue, he's deceiving his own heart and his religion is vain." That's the idea. That's the word "seem."

Second, notice the word "if," "If any among you seem to be religious," and the idea of that word "if" is this, this is what the Greek can do in the New Testament language there, that it means this, there are some in the audience who are doing this. James knows that he's not just speaking theoretically, but he knows he is addressing people who are struggling with this. They thought they were very religious but their religion was showing itself to be a vain religion. That's the word "if."

And then third, notice the word "religion" or "religious," "If any among you seem to be religious." And then you have the word "religion" again at the end of verse 26 and the beginning of verse 27. In our day and age, the word "religion" has various connotations, and I would think, generally speaking, in society, the word "religious" almost has bad connotations, as if to be religious means that you just go through the outward formalities, there's no involvement of the heart, there's no spiritual significance, it's a mere outward act. And if someone were to ask you if you are a religious person, I think you would probably feel the need to qualify yourself and you would say, "Well, what does that mean because I am religious, but my religion is no mere outward show." In the passage, this word "religious" simply refers to how our worship shows itself, whether that be in public worship, whether it be in our daily living, it refers to the outward expression of religious duty, to do what is expected in a religious sense.

Now what the passage says is that there are two kinds of religion. There is a vain religion and there is a pure and undefiled religion. The word "vain" usually means "empty," but here in verse 26, the word "vain" really has the idea of aimless, purposeless. There's no point to it. It's empty. And so in that sense, it's empty. It doesn't have any goal. It doesn't have any true fruit. It's a mere outward going through the motions and in that sense, it is an empty religion.

So think of a man or think of a woman or a young person who is in church. He's singing in church. She's giving to the collection plate. He dresses carefully. He's got the right shoes on. But his worship is aimless. He's there in body, but not in heart. You might say maybe there is an outward purpose to impress others or to make yourself look good in front of others, but there's no heart worship of God in it. This is how much religion was characterized in Jesus' day. Think of the Pharisees. This is a huge problem throughout Jesus' ministry. Think of his Sermon on the Mount, three whole chapters and he mentions all kinds of things that the Pharisees were doing, praying, fasting, doing their alms, and they're doing these things with great diligence. They were very religious, but their religion was vain. In Matthew 23, Jesus spends another entire, even lengthy, chapter on this same topic. Look at the Pharisees. They make long prayers just for an outward show, and yet what they're doing in private is devouring widows' houses, extorting money from the widows and the vulnerable. They swear nice oaths on the temple and the gold in the temple, but their fingers are crossed behind their back. They pay all their tithes of anise and cumin, but they don't do the weightier matters of the law, carrying out justice and mercy and being faithful. And it's exactly what Jesus expresses also in the passage we read this evening, the parable of the good Samaritan. You have a priest, you have a Levite, you have religious leaders, highly esteemed by the people, and they're walking down the street, and there they come across a child of God from church who's suffering and in need and maybe even he calls out to them for help, but maybe he's not even able to do that, and the priest and the Levite just walk around that person and they cross over to the other side of the street and keep on their merry way. Maybe they keep humming the tune to their favorite Psalter number. They make sure that their suit stays clean, but they don't care to help.

And just remember for a moment that these saints to whom James was writing were predominantly of a Jewish background, right? Remember? They were, this is very early New Testament history, they had fled from Jerusalem because of persecution. They were of a Jewish background predominantly. So James is writing here to people who, as they grew up in that Jewish culture, were taught to esteem this kind of behavior and I can imagine that there were some, perhaps even many, who were converted to Christianity and this was still a bit of a struggle for them, that they still had that old pharisaical attitude dwelling in them. Sad thing is, this can happen in the church today too. Maybe it comes in the form of people who come to church simply because they have to, right, to maintain appearances. And we understand how that goes. Maybe it also comes in the form of people who've established a very high reputation for themselves among God's people, and they need to nurture and protect that reputation. And maybe there are even some that we look to as the ultra-orthodox. They know all the doctrine. They're up to date on all the church news. They read the right version of the Bible. They know how to pronounce their shibboleths, right? They know the Christian lingo. The outward form is there, but the danger is that they have a form of godliness, but they're denying the power thereof and the real danger is that they're simply living for men, and they're not living before the face of God and James writes, that man, that woman is deceiving himself, herself. His religion, his outward public worship is aimless. He knows what God's word

says, but he doesn't do it. There's no heart in it. It's worthless according to the judgment of God.

But then James goes on and he writes about a pure religion. There is a pure and undefiled religion. Now those two words, pure and undefiled, really go together. This is, you might say, James's Jewish language coming out, the Jewish parallelism. Pure and undefiled. The one expands on the other. Undefiled really means unstained so it's pure. And one thing that's worth pointing out here is that James is not against religion. James is not against outward religious practices. That's the danger, too, when the pendulum swings in that opposite direction. Just think of Jesus. Jesus himself instituted certain religious practices. We just exercised one this morning, the Lord's Supper. And there's baptism. He calls us to gather for public worship together. And Jesus, as King of his church, cares that the worship service be proper, that his people follow his directives for how to worship him, how to carry out those religious ceremonies. We certainly must have a care for these things but at the same time there needs to be more because the worship must be from the heart. It must be honest and true, worshiping God in spirit and in truth. A worship that's flowing out of this relationship that God has established with us, that he's raised us unto, this is worship that has purpose. That's why I've come here tonight, because I have purpose and chief of all is to worship my God and honor him, and then everything else serves that, right? And it's worship, therefore, that pleases the Lord. I have purpose here tonight.

Well, the question that comes to us this evening is twofold. First, are you religious? Well, I think we have to answer that, yes, we are, and there's nothing wrong with that. In a certain sense, everyone is religious, everyone has something that they're living for, everyone has a lifestyle that they've accommodated to the one that they trust or maybe it's the idol that they serve or the one that they look to for salvation. They order their lives according to some kind of religious sentiments. But the second question is this, is our religion pure? Is it undefiled? Is it honest? Is it true? Or is it vain, aimless, purposeless, without any point? Well, James helps us to answer that question by what he says in the text about the characteristics of true religion and by implication, he also mentions some of the characteristics of a vain religion. There's three characteristics of true religion that James brings up in the text and let's just treat them in order.

First of all, in verse 26, James mentions the use of the tongue. He writes, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." So the first characteristic of pure and undefiled religion is this: the control of one's tongue. And the figure that James uses here is striking. He uses the word bridleth. Children, think about it this way. Think of your tongue as a horse, a powerful, rearing horse. And this horse is ready to take off on a wild ride, galloping like crazy and he's ready to go if the rider is not there in the saddle holding the reins tight, controlling the horse. That's what your tongue is. It's like a wild horse. In James chapter 3, James will have more to say about the tongue but the point is, pure religion is a religion that controls the tongue. There are people who consider themselves to be religious. They are very proper in their worship, but they have tongues that run wild and what James is saying is this, an out of control tongue suggests bogus religious

devotion, no matter how well that religious devotion is carried out. A person might think he is religious, but if he's not bridling his tongue, he's tricking himself. That's the word "deceive." He's tricking himself. You yell and you scream, you tear others down with your words, and James says, your religion is vain. You speak filthy words. You let corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. James says, your religion is worthless and what James perhaps especially has in mind is the idea of gossip and slander. That's when our tongues run loose, isn't it? You tear others down behind their backs. You pass on unloving rumors. James says, your religion is vain.

Now we need to understand that James is talking here about a pattern of life. We understand James will go on in chapter three to say, we all offend in many things. No child of God is perfect and particularly when it comes to sins of the tongue. James says, if you can control the tongue, you've controlled the whole body, but what James has in mind here is that this is how a person is living. They have their outward religion, but the way that they're actually living is like this, they let their tongues run wild. And you can easily find that in the church too, behind closed doors. What kind of filthy language are we using? And in a tight-knit community, how are we talking about other people? Sometimes with the gossip and slander, we can find ourselves feeding the hatred that we have for other people by how we talk in our private lives. Sunday mornings we're full of smiles and handshakes, but throughout the week we're tearing each other down. That man's religion, that woman's religion is vain.

And why is this something James brings up? Why is this such a clear sign of true religion? Because as Jesus says, it's out of the heart that the mouth speaks. If you slander and you gossip, you're ripping each other down with your words, that's your heart. Where is the love of the neighbor? That's what the lawyer asked Jesus. Who is my neighbor? Love your neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Where's the love? We could ask, why am I even behaving this way, right? That's the issue. Is it because I love God? Or is it because I'm loving myself? And we can add to this, this issue of the tongue is simply a specific application of an even broader issue, right? The broader issue is the whole matter of self-control. Not just what comes off the tongue, but where's my self-control, right? That's a fruit of the Spirit. Temperance. Self-control. Well, we can probably get a good self-assessment of this fruit of the Spirit in our lives just by listening to what's coming out of our mouth. Putting on a good show before others, but when it comes to exercising control over my tongue, it's possible only by the grace of God. Pure religion is this, I do bridle my tongue. I know the power of the tongue, and I strive honestly to have the new man in Christ sitting in the saddle, holding the reins, so that the new man is controlling the tongue for a good use, so that there's fresh water proceeding out of it and not bitter, so that my words build up and edify, so that no corrupt communication is proceeding out of my mouth. And where we have to pray for that, "Lord, keep thou the door of my lips." Well then we do that. We work on that. This is an applicatory sermon. This is what we're looking at.

The second characteristic of pure religion is this: a true care for the needy and the unfortunate. James writes in verse 27, "to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction." And now here too, we need to understand that James is not just concerned

about the fatherless and widow, but there's a broader emphasis, right? There's a broader point he's making. Now in James's day, that was the issue, there were many fatherless and widows, and in James's day, these were the most helpless people in Jewish society. They struggled to have even food and clothing, and there were many who took advantage of them, right? Matthew 23, Jesus sees the Pharisees, the religious leaders, devouring widows' homes, exploiting them because they didn't have anyone to protect themselves against the leaders in the church. Or think of Jesus' parable of the unjust judge, the civil authorities who would not give her a fair hearing and adjust treatment because, well, she can't pay him money under the table to get even a fair hearing. You see, this was part of daily life in Jesus' day. Now today we might have a somewhat different situation, but it should seem clear that James is using widows and orphans as representatives of those who are in need, those who need help.

And the word "visit" in the passage, visit the fatherless and widow, that doesn't just mean sit down and have coffee with them but the word "visit" means to care for them. God visits us in our affliction. He doesn't just sit and have coffee with us. He helps us. Do we visit the widows and the orphans? Or do we care for those who are in need? And I've heard wonderful, beautiful stories. This is very encouraging. We see pure religion. But here are some examples. Maybe this person who is in need is coming from a broken home and needs a place to stay. Maybe this person is coming off of drugs and needs help getting back on his feet. Or maybe she's been rejected by her family and she needs to be shown what unconditional love actually looks like. And now the question comes to us personally in my own personal religion, so that I don't just shove this on the church and say, "Well, the church will take care of that." But this is my own personal religion. Do I care? Am I visiting them?

This is why we read the parable of the good Samaritan. Look at the priest. Look at that Levite. You can imagine that as they passed that man on the road, there were some thoughts going through their minds. Maybe the priest and the Levite thought, "Well, we better keep moving along, otherwise we might get beaten up and robbed as well." Or maybe they thought, "Serves the man right for walking alone. Everyone knows you shouldn't be walking this road alone. This man needs to confess his sin first before we help him." Or maybe they thought, "I don't want to get my hands dirty. I'm too busy. I'm going to be late for my Levites coffee this morning if I stop and help this person." And there they go, walking on the other side of the road, and their religion is vain.

And again, why is this such a matter, why is this a characteristic of true religion? Why something like this? Because, as one commentary I read this past week put it, quote, kindness to them is pure kindness. It's merely mercy for the sake of mercy because those who help widows and orphans cannot expect to receive anything tangible in return. Widows and orphans are likely to be poor for a long time. You're going to be taking care of them for a long time. It's an expression of unconditional love. No strings attached. "I just want to show you grace." And it's important for discerning true religion because this is who God is, beloved, and this is exactly who God is and how God has behaved and acted towards us. Why does a child of God show kindness to others and knows in need? Because he and she themselves know personally what grace is. That child of God knows,

"That was me. I too was a stranger in Egypt and God showed me mercy. And God has made me so unspeakably happy in saving me, giving me Jesus, and loving me. And now with God dwelling in my own heart, this is how I need to behave towards this person, particularly in the church. This is my brother. This is my sister. How can I not care for them?" Pure religion is this, to visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction. John puts it this way in 1 John 3, verses 17 and 18, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him," right, his tender mercies, "how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

Well, the third characteristic of pure religion is this, as James goes on to put it in verse 27, to keep himself unspotted from the world. And the figure that James is using there is of a person wearing a nice, beautiful, perhaps white robe, and now he has this calling to walk through a field or walk down a muddy path, and as he walks down that muddy path, he's very careful to pick up his robe and not get his robe dirty from the mud. He's careful. She's very careful. And the mud, of course, in the figure is sin, the sin of the world. The mud is the unclean material that's on many TV shows. The mud is the unclean songs with their raunchy lyrics blaring from the stereo. The mud is the ungodly lifestyles of the people of the world and the ungodly worldview of the culture we live in. And James says, pure religion is this, you're very careful as you make your way through this world. You pull up your robe because you don't want to get who you are as a Christian to be stained by the pollution and filth, the sin of the world. We're called to be in the world, we've got to make that walk, but we must not be of the world.

And why is this a mark of true religion? Why is this so important? Because the reality is, a Christian is one who wants to be holy. He treats that special robe that God has given him as something very, very special. It cost the blood of Jesus Christ to purchase that robe for him and it's only by a wonder work of God that he has received this robe and so he is very scrupulous and diligent with what God has given him. He wants to be holy. And because as James goes on to say in chapter 4, friendship with the world is enmity against God, "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." You can't roll around in the mud and then expect to be walking hand-in-hand with the God who is of beauty and pure light. That doesn't go together. And because as John says in 1 John 2 verse 15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Now we're not talking about the world of this creation, but we're talking about the world of sin, the world under the power and influence of sin.

Well then, we might raise the question, if I can't love the world, if I need to keep myself unspotted from the world, this seems like such a strict requirement, what should I be doing instead? How do I keep myself from that? Well, let these other things fill the void. Visit the fatherless and the widow. Maybe grab the directory, go through the church directory and find someone in church that you could encourage this week. Yesterday, the young people went about helping some of the elderly with their lawn work and others besides. That's awesome. That fills the whole congregation with joy. That's pure religion when we're not doing it just out of emotion, just because I have to do it, but when you



say, "Hey, this is where we with our strength as young people can help and be a blessing to God's, our brothers and sisters in the Lord." Maybe instead of talking bad about someone, when we have that inclination to gossip and rip someone apart in the privacy of our own homes, maybe we could say to each other, "Let's pray for these persons instead of tear them down." Maybe that's exactly what they need. How am I better than them? I need them. They need prayers, just as I need prayers. And what James is emphasizing is that this is a matter of the heart, and what God says to us, and we're coming from the Lord's Supper, what God says to us is this, "Give me your heart." It's what the preacher, well, that's what Solomon says to his son. That's what God says to us as his children. "My son, my daughter, give me your heart. That's what I want." That's pure religion.

So we've looked at the three characteristics of pure religion. What I want to do now is apply this and make this real. How do we apply these things to our lives? Well, to do that, I want to bring this back to the situation that James was dealing with with these saints to whom he's writing. If you remember, these saints to whom James is writing were saints who had fled from Jerusalem because of persecution. They're going through many trials. Many of them are poor. Some of them are rich. Their life is difficult. They're living as pilgrims and strangers and they are struggling to handle the various trials and temptations that are coming their way. Now let me ask you, when you find yourself in that kind of a situation, a difficult situation, what happens? Right, you're stressed. You're drained. You're tired. You're discouraged. What do you do? Well, maybe you turn your thoughts towards vacation, right? Or a break that's coming up. "I just have to make it to that point." But what if that's not a reality, right? What if this is just your lot and day in and day out, this is what you're experiencing? Well, what happens is this, it becomes very easy to start becoming short-tempered, start letting the reins slip, right, because we're getting weary. It's easy to start having a negative attitude towards others so that I gossip and slander. Or maybe it's easy just to stop caring about my fellow Christian because I've got my own issues. And then what happens is this, it becomes very easy to start fellowshiping with the world, right, start making those compromises with sin. We just want to relax and so we watch this movie and, you know, I know it's not good, but we do it because we're tired, right? What are we supposed to do? And then in other ways, the communion of the saints starts breaking down. "I'm tired. It's Sunday morning. I just want to sleep in." And for my part, I think these are the kinds of things James has in mind and he wants to encourage these saints. He says, "Look, this is what pleases God and the Father. This is pure religion, self-control in your conversations with others. True love towards the neighbor. Living a holy life in the fear of the Lord. That's what pleases the Lord." Be encouraged.

Now maybe there are some of us here tonight who are in these situations. We're stressed. We're discouraged. We're struggling. And then maybe remember we're tempted to blame God, right? We've looked at that in previous verses. "God was the one tempting me." Right? That's what James is dealing with. And we're struggling. It's at those times we're tempted to use our tongue as a weapon and stop caring for others and we make those compromises, and what I want you to carry home tonight is this, exactly in those moments when the going gets tough and you are struggling, remember what pure religion is. "I have a purpose. I have an aim. I'm pursuing the honor and glory of my God." Let's

remember what pleases the Lord. There's that phrase, actions speak louder than words. God himself says you will know them by their fruits. This is where my religion actually becomes that witness to others and the light begins to twinkle and shine on the hill.

This is where all our doctrine starts to really serve its purpose, where it starts bringing forth fruit, putting the doctrine into practice to the glory of God, and we can even say, this is where we will also experience and enjoy our own salvation in a richer way and we'll go from strength to strength. We heard it last week, those who are not only hearers of the word, but doers of the word, they shall be blessed in their deed. Exercise self-control. Care for those in need. Keep yourself separate from the world. Be careful about getting your garments spotted. These are the characteristics of pure religion. We've looked at the characteristics. In the last point of the sermon now, I want to give you encouragement, I want to give you motivation, and the encouragement is this: this is what God has made you to be in Christ. This is what God has equipped you to do and the motivation is this, it should be obvious. We've just come from the Lord's Supper. We've just experienced that unspeakable peace and joy of sitting with our Lord, knowing that he shed his blood for us, knowing our salvation, that's motivation. Encouragement. This is God's purpose with you. His purpose with us is that we might be holy and without blame before him in love. His purpose is that we might bring forth good fruit to the glory of the husbandman's name, the gardener's name. His purpose is that we might reflect the love and beauty of Christ. That's his purpose with us and that's also what he will do with us. He strengthens us for these things. You've been strengthened through the preaching and through the Lord's Supper for these things. That's encouragement. Go forth strong. You've been strengthened.

And then motivation. This is also our reasonable service. We've been saved in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. All my sins are blotted out. And as we heard this morning, it doesn't matter if it's a good day or a bad day, God loves me with an unconditional love. My identity, our identity unto all eternity is that we will always be children of the King and we belong to Jesus, the Lamb who sits on the throne. All things are for us. We've been justified through faith. We have peace with God. That's motivation. Knowing the mercies of God shown to us in Jesus Christ, we ought to be motivated in a life, to live a life that pleases him, to live this life of pure religion.

Be encouraged, beloved. Be motivated. This is what pleases your Savior. This is what brings satisfaction to our spiritual hearts. This is what the new heart in us desires to do. Maybe the outward man is perishing day by day as we lay down our lives, but the inward man feeds off of it. He does, she does, you've experienced it. The inward man feeds off of it. Maybe that good Samaritan lost some money as he helped out that man suffering on the side of the road. And this is just a parable, I don't mean to judge the Samaritan's salvation, that's beside the point, but I think we could say he knew what was right before God, and he knew that this is what honors God. This is what is right in the eyes of God. Now you, beloved, go forth from the Lord's Supper and live this life too, this life of pure religion. Or just as Jesus said to the lawyer in Luke chapter 10, "Go and do thou likewise." Amen.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, we exult in the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ and we've tasted it and enjoyed it this morning and now we ask Thee that Thou wouldst by Thy Holy Spirit quicken that flame in our hearts to live this life that is well pleasing unto Thee. Strengthen us, Lord. Guide us. Bless us to Thy name's glory and honor. We and all that we are and all that we have is Thine. Take it, Lord, and press it on to the service of Thy glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*