**SUNDAY 9/5/21**

**SERMON**

**MARK 7:24-37**

During the Super Bowl some years back, The Ameriquest Mortgage Company

          sponsored a commercial with a powerful message.

It began with a man preparing a romantic dinner.

He was chopping kitchen vegetables with a large knife,

          while tomato sauce simmered on the stove.

His white cat was prowling around the kitchen.

Suddenly, the cat jumped up on the stove

          and knocked the pan of sauce onto the floor.

Startled, the cat lost its balance and fell into the messy sauce.

Just as the man picked up his tomato-sauce splattered cat,

          his wife came into the kitchen.

She froze as she saw her husband holding the cat,

          dripping with red sauce in one hand,

          and a large knife in the other.

Then the message, "Don't judge too quickly" flashed on the screen.

In our reading from the book of James we are warned not to judge too quickly,

          for when we do, it is easy to assume the worst, when the best is intended.

It is easy to make snap judgments which we will later regret.

If a well-dressed person enters at the same time

          a poor person with shabby clothes comes in,

          it is so easy to honor the person in fancy clothes,

          and ignore the poorly dressed person.

But our judgements can be completely wrong.

We need to get to know people before we judge them.

It is so easy to stereotype people.

In a courtroom a trial was getting underway.

The selection of jurors was getting started.

A prospective juror was being questioned.

An obviously irate judge was glaring down from his bench at the prospective juror.

“And just why is it," the judge asked, "that you don't want to serve on this jury?”

The man replied, "Well, Judge, I'm biased."

He pointed at a man sitting at the table.

“One look at that man convinced me that he is guilty.”

Stunned, the judged frowned and replied,

          “That man is not the defendant, that is his lawyer.”

The judge was angry as he dismissed the potential juror.

He could not allow someone who had already made up his mind incorrectly

          to serve on the jury.

Misjudging people can often get us into greater difficulties.

If our faith is working, we will obey God and let Him be the judge.

Faith is an action word.

If we do not put our faith into action, it accomplishes little.

What good is it if we say we have faith but do not accomplish God's work?

Many years ago Charles Schultz drew a cartoon

          of Snoopy sitting on top of his doghouse,

          shivering in a fierce snowstorm.

Next to Snoopy was his empty food dish.

He was looking longingly, expectantly, hopefully, toward the house.

Lucy came out and said, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled!"

And then she turned, and went back into the house, and slammed the door.

In the last frame there was a very confused Snoopy looking toward the house,

          shivering, and hungry, and utterly baffled.

If we are to really love and care for our neighbor,

          it requires more than words,

          it requires action.

Faith and works are like the light and heat of a candle.

They cannot be separated.

Faith and works should travel side-by-side, step answering to step,

          like the legs of someone walking.

First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again —

          until they can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other.

The Bible teaches us to make sure our faith is not just religion,

          but actually the way we live, and what we do.

Faith leads to action.

Faith is something we do.

We show our faith by our works.

Everyone has problems, both poor people and rich people.

Everyone has the need to serve God by serving others — both rich and poor alike.

By putting our faith into action, we make a difference.

There was a small church which had a weekly feeding ministry

          for the poor and homeless in the area.

There was a woman who helped every week at this ministry.

She was so poor that she, too, needed some of the food

          they were taking and delivering to folks.

In spite of her poverty, she was often the one who prayed,

          always thanking God,

          before they went out to deliver food to the needy.

She was one of the most joyful, humble, and fun persons to serve beside.

She helped everyone to know God better.

She clearly showed her faith by her deeds and actions.

It has been said that faith is like calories.

You can't see them, but you can see their results.

The life of Jesus is a life of unconditional, undiscriminating love,

          and never ending actions.

We ought to imitate Him more often.

The woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit,

          experienced His love and action.

So did the deaf man who had a speech impediment.

Jesus cared about them and healed them.

Jesus wants us to care about others, and help them  in the same way.

God wants us to make a difference in this world.

One small action can create a ripple which can eventually touch thousands of lives.

When our faith is demonstrated by our actions,

          people are helped and healed,

          and it makes a great difference throughout the world.

AMEN