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St. John's Episcopal Church, Minneapolis

### Labor Day with Brother Jim

We will never know for sure, but the guy who wrote today's Epistle was probably Jesus' brother James. He was deeply respected all over the early church, and became known as James the Just. Unlike some brothers of remarkable people, James did not seem overshadowed by Jesus. Instead, he reflected Jesus' light.

James could have written some bestsellers: *Me and Jesus*. *When God Comes To Live In Your House*. and *Who Are My Mother And Brothers?*

Instead, he wrote about favoritism. Partiality. Prejudice. Honoring the poor, not only with our lips, but in our lives. *What good is it if you say you have faith but do nothing with it? If a brother or sister has no clothing or food and you speak nicely to them, or preach about them with great concern, but do nothing to help them? Faith without works is dead. Love your neighbor as yourself.*

Jesus told a story that James surely loved. Might have even been a family story. A parent tells two kids to do their chores. One jumps up with eagerness and describes exactly how she's going to do it. The other doesn't even take his eyes off the video game: *uh, maybe some other time*. But the first kid gets distracted and never cleans her room and the second finishes his game and says to himself, *stop being a jerk. Go clean the bathroom*. Which one did the will of the parent, the nice one or the sullen one? The one who walked the walk or the other one, who talked the talk?

Talk is cheap, which is why my sermon today is one page long.

In the Gospel, Jesus escapes for a long weekend to the coast where he could avoid running into anyone who knows him. His quiet time is disturbed when an unclean spirit possessing a foreign woman's daughter recognizes him. The woman asks for help.

*Go away. I've got nothing for you. I'm Jewish.*  
*Fine. I understand. Got any leftovers?*  
*Whoa! You are persistent. Yeah, sure.*

She didn't care if the first time Jesus looked at her, all he saw was *Not My People*. She didn't mind if he compared her to a little puppy hoping for table scraps. The minute he came to his senses and saw her as a person, the Golden Rule kicked in, and he did the right thing.

My earlier drafts went on much longer, and I do take my role as a preacher seriously. I do love to talk. But it's hot. I think I'll do the right thing, too.  
{sit down}