

“The God Who Comes Close”

Mount of Olives | August 2, 2026 | James 1:27

Guest Speaker Rev. Jesse Martin

Prayer of the Day

Heavenly Father, so often we strive so hard to succeed; only to struggle, worry, and often fail. Yet when we rely on Your way completely – listening and yielding to Your voice and direction, we find peace and the proper direction. Help us to get better at submitting to You. Help us to be sensitive and aware of Your direction and guidance, for You are faithful and will never let us go. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading

James 1:27

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Message Notes

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:6-8

...who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Psalms 37:23-24

Our steps are made firm by the Lord, when he delights in our way; though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand.

Study Questions – Read James 1:19-27

ICEBREAKER – Getting started:

1. Who is someone outside your family who made a positive difference in your life? What did they do?
2. If you could volunteer for any cause for one day, what would you choose and why?
3. What is one act of kindness someone has shown you that you have never forgotten?
4. When you hear the word *religion*, what words or images immediately come to mind?
5. What do you think is more difficult: helping people in need or resisting the negative influences of the world? Why?

Based on James 1:19-27, answer the following questions:

OBSERVATION – What does the text say?

1. As you read **James 1:19-27**, what comes to mind? What stands out? What is interesting to you and why?
2. In one sentence, how would you summarize this text?

3. What lesson or message do you think the author is trying to convey?

INTERPRETATION – What does the text mean?

1. Read James 1:27 aloud. According to this verse, how does James define "pure and undefiled religion"?

2. What do the words **"before God the Father"** teach us about whose opinion matters most?

3. Why do you think James specifically mentions **orphans and widows** instead of simply saying "people in need"?

4. In biblical times, what challenges did orphans and widows commonly face?

5. What does the phrase **"visit orphans and widows"** mean? Does it simply mean stopping by for a visit, or does it imply something more?

6. How does caring for vulnerable people reflect God's own character throughout Scripture?

7. Why is the phrase **"in their affliction"** significant? What does it teach us about responding to people during difficult seasons?

8. James also says believers should **"keep oneself unstained from the world."** What does he mean by "the world" in this context?

9. How are compassion for others and personal holiness connected in this verse?

10. What are some examples in the New Testament where Jesus demonstrated the principles found in James 1:27?

11. How does James 1:27 challenge the idea that faith is only about attending worship services or possessing biblical knowledge?

12. After reading James 1:27, what would you say are the two essential marks of authentic Christian faith?

APPLICATION – How can you apply the text?

1. Who are the "orphans and widows" in today's world—those who are especially vulnerable or overlooked—and how can we care for them?

2. What is one practical way you could demonstrate Christ's love to someone who is struggling this week?

3. Are there any influences in your life that make it difficult to remain "unstained from the world"? How can you guard against them?

4. How can our church become better known for both compassion toward those in need and faithfulness to God's truth?

5. What habits can help us maintain a balance between serving others and pursuing personal holiness?

6. If someone evaluated your faith only by the way you treated vulnerable people, what conclusions might they draw?

7. What is one specific action you will take this week to put James 1:27 into practice?