

8-13-23 Communion Sunday

Sermon: Righteous Submission

Scripture: James 4:1-12, CTW: reading 598

Hymns: 595, 596, 597

Theme: Murder, strife, envy, and pride. All these character flaws are all a part of today's sermon. Righteous living as a church begins with righteous lives of our members.

James told us in the previous chapter about how we praise God and curse man with the same mouth. These words all come from thoughts within. They come from our desires. **Our** desires, **not** God's will.

I. Today James Digs Deeper by Addressing our Desires and their Effect on us.

James 4:1-2 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? **2** You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God."

A. James asserts that all of our fights and arguments come from our evil desires within us. These desires not only manifest themselves in our own minds, but they show themselves in our dealings with other members and the public at large.

When we come to Christ and accept him as our personal Lord and Savior, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. That gift comes with a desire to do God's will.

It is our own sinful nature and desire that causes the strife inside of us. Our evil desires drive us to gain more possessions, to acquire more wealth, to lust after another and drive fancier cars.

Power, prestige, and prominence are material things and go directly against the Holy Spirit. It is these same desires that drive

us to aggressively pursue these so-called gains. Deep in our hearts, we know what motivates our thoughts and our actions.

Jesus teaches us concerning our possessions in **Matthew 16:26** "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?"

B. Power, prestige and wealth will not buy us into eternity. This life is but an introduction into forever. It does not matter what possessions we have gained or how much we have in our bank account.

If you were to win the Nobel Peace Prize or top the list of the wealthiest men alive, you still would not be given entrance to heaven without Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

We are told to take everything before the Lord in Prayer, including our materialistic requests. **Matthew 7:7** reminds us "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; Knock and the door will be opened to you."

These two teachings appear at first to be contradictory, but James tells us in verse 3: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

C. When we ask for things in prayer, what are our motives? Are they only selfish and self-serving? When we talk to God, are we only carrying on a one-sided conversation? Are we just looking to fulfill our own desires or are we sometimes seeking his approval in what we are already planning to do?

Do you earnestly seek His will for your life? If we want to have an effective witness and an effective presence in our life, we must earnestly seek not only the face of God but his heart as well.

Verses 4-6 remind us: "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who

chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. **5** Or do you think the Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? **6** That is why the Scripture says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

When we place our desires and needs above God's, we are replacing God in our lives with material things. When we embrace the world and all it has to offer, we take our eyes off God and the price he gave for us.

How many of us could stand by and watch his only son be crucified without trying to stop it. God did. His perfect plan for our salvation is Jesus Christ, his only son. Yet, we tend to lose sight of that in our pursuit of material gain.

Jesus taught us in **John 15:19** "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

If you replace the phrase "the world" with Satan, you can see with clear eyes what Jesus did for us. If you belong to Satan, then he would love you as his own, as it is, you do not belong to Satan, but Jesus has chosen you out of Satan.

That is why Satan hates you. Jesus Christ has purchased us from Satan and when we turn our backs on God and embrace materialism, we reject God and his Son.

James quoted Proverbs 3:34 "He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble." God will hold all accountable for all they do. He will be the one to have the last laugh so to speak.

When he says he gives grace to the humble...that does not mean that situations or circumstances will miraculously change but rather, **we will be given the strength and wisdom to deal with it and handle it.** We will be able to stand on the word of God and persevere.

II. For James, It All Has A Lot To Do With Submission

Verses 7-10: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash you hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Grieve mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up."

A. Submit to God. Our pride and self-sufficient behaviors are tools the devil will use to try and separate us from God. We must resist Satan's ways. We must resist Satan and the emotional and physical things he uses to separate us from God.

If you are depressed, God can lift you up. Are you mad? God can give you peace. Are you hurting? God understands and can help you through it.

All you have to do is earnestly seek him. Show him by your actions you are sorry for the sins you have committed. **That is so important when we come to his table!** Draw near to God so he can wrap his loving fatherly arms around you.

We need to become clean in heart and spirit. We have to show God that we are truly repentant. **James tells us to grieve, mourn and wail.**

We need to bare our deepest human emotions to God. If you are angry with him, let him know. If you are sad, tell him. The true root of all anger is a hurt somewhere and God can help.

How often do we find pleasure in the material things of the world? How often have you thought, well, I sure could use a better car or if I only had a nicer house, I would invite the missionaries to stay with me.

Or when the call for service comes out, we use the excuse that we need this or that before we can answer that call. Thank God

he did not place the same materialistic values on our salvation as we do for our service to him!

B. We are to humble ourselves before the Lord, then and only then will He lift us up. Why is that? Is it because only when our pride is demolished that can we approach God with a true spirit of willingness for His good and perfect will for our lives.

I believe that when we come to God humbly, we realize our self-worth is nothing without Him. **God is our purpose for being.** He is the reason we are alive. It is through His Son that we have gained salvation and that without him, we are nothing more than fuel for an eternal fire.

III. James Concludes with a Primer on Judgement in verses 11 and 12:

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. **12** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you -- who are you to judge your neighbor?

A. When we have finally surrendered totally to God, we give up our judgment seat. As people belonging to the world, we were constantly judging others as we think things ought to be.

Now, we are citizens of heaven. Heaven has only one true Lawgiver and judge. We humbly submit ourselves to him and we show him that we are His by rejecting the world and its standards.

We cannot judge the lawgiver or the law. We must change our attitude towards others. We must remember that we too are sinners and no different from anybody else. We all have sinned,

and all have fallen short. It is only through the Grace of God that we are saved, and it must reflect in our lives.

B. The question that James wants us to think about and answer is “Do we as believers tear people down or build them up?”

Are we effectively showing the Love of Christ in our everyday lives or are we just blowing smoke? The fewer faults we find in others, the more God can use us for his kingdom.

There is only one God; there is only one son, Jesus Christ. We are not the author of the Law, nor are we the judge. As such we should follow Jesus Command in **Matthew 7:12**:

“Therefore, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Love your neighbor as you would yourself. Show the fruits of the spirit in your life and in your humble submission to God.

I would like to leave you today with a verse that has personally given me strength in my greatest hours of need as well as in life itself,

Isaiah 41:10 “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Let us prepare ourselves to come to God’s Table!

Let us Pray...